MUSLIM STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN BENGAL

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A.D. 1757-1947

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the Muslims in Bengal under British rule (A.D. 1757-1947) represents a sad story interspersed with brilliant epochs of heroic struggle for self-preservation under adverse circumstances and for freeing the country from foreign yoke. The two trends of the struggle, which were closely interlinked, took different shapes at different times with the change of circumstances and opportunity though their basic aims remained always the same.

In the first place, as soon as the heat of the Plassey conspiracy passed, the Muslim upper class realised the damaging consequences of British occupation. They flocked under the patriotic banner of Nawab Mir Qasim in A.D. 1763-1764 with the object of driving the foreign rulers out of the country. But unskilled soldiery and broken spirit of a decaying feudalism proved fragile when struck by well-disciplined and better equipped British army at Katwa and Buxar[1]. Localised sporadic rebellion against the British rule are also observed in the activities of the *Faqirs* and *Sanyasis* under the leadersrip of Majnu Shah and others during the later half of the eighteenth century. But being more or less detached from the mass of the people, their struggle fell short of producing any abiding effect or fruitful result.

Secondly, the mass of the people having been accustomed for centuries to thrive in their peaceful callings under the protection of the Muslim upper class, appear to have grown a sense of disinterestedness in political affairs. For, political changes in earlier times affected only the top layer of the society and the Muslim princes who established their own rule from time to time always had the welfare of the masses in view.

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[1] Cf. Dr. A. Halim, "the struggle in Bengal," *History of the Freedom Movement, Vol. I,* Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1957.

Naturally, the masses were slow in realising the difference between an indigenous rule and a foreign regime and it took them a long time to grasp the awful consequences of the Battle of Plassey (A.D. 1757). As a matter of fact, they began to evince a "collective consciousness" of a socio-political nature not earlier than A.D. 1820; that is also under the pressure of economic destruction to which they were subjected by the self-aggrandising policy of the East India Company's servants. The renewed struggle which stemmed from this mass-consciousness was confined more or less to the mass-society or lower class, and unlike the earlier political repercussions, it was motivated by the economic welfare of the masses and derived its inspiration from religious reform movements, which remained effective down to A.D. 1870.

Thirdly, during the middle of the nineteenth century a small middle class was also growing among the Muslims of Bengal, which being convinced of the invincible military strength of the British, endeavoured to direct Muslim thought and energy towards absorbing Western culture in self-preparation. On the ruins of the great rebellion of 1857-58, they built up a constitutional movement with the object of ameliorating socio-economic conditions of the Muslims and of bringing them at par with the progressive Hindus so as to prepare them to fight out their own future in a worthwhile manner. This modernist movement was in line with the Aligarh movement of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and was largely responsible for the growth of a healthy political consciousness among the Muslims of Bengal during the twentieth century.

Although it can be asserted that the struggle for freedom in Bengal started soon after the Battle of Plassey, there is little in the eighteenth century which can be regarded as going beyond local patriotism. It is, indeed, the advent of mass-consciousness in the nineteenth century which can be directly or indirectly linked up with the chain of religious, economic and political movements which eventually led to the achievement of Pakistan. Again in a strictly nationalistic sense, freedom movement among the Muslims of Bengal with a well defined objective may be said to have started in 1940, by their collaboration with other Muslims of the sub-continent in Pakistan movement. But, as indicated above, the Pakistan movement itself was not the commencement of the struggle but represented the beginning of the end. It was a climax of a series of religious, social and political movements which started more than a century earlier. In this broader perspective, the struggle for freedom in Bengal is to be regarded as more or less co-extensive with the growth of mass-consciousness. Hence, our account must begin from the time of the advent of this phenomenon in the nineteenth century.

Accordingly, the present study has been divided into ten chapters dealing with the socio-economic background of the freedon movement, the character of the religious reform movements and the peasant agitation of Bengal during the nineteenth century, and the different aspects of the constitutional movement from soon after the great rebellion of 1857-58 down to the achievement of Pakistan in 1947.

CHAPTER 1

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE MUSLIMS OF BENGAL (A.D. 1757-1830)

Before British occupation, the Muslim society of Bengal consisted broadly of two classes: the upper and the lower. The upper class formed a small group who held sway over the country as rulers, administrators, *zamindars,* free-land holders and learned stipendiaries. Besides, a small band of Shi'ite merchants also formed a significant group in the trade and commerce of Bengal. The position of these groups of people, as may be gleaned from contemporary sources, makes it at once clear that the power and prosperity of the Muslim upper class was more or less dependent on Government patronage which they naturally received as the ruling class.

The vast majority of the Muslims of Bengal who formed the lower strata of the society, however, consisted of husbandmen, weavers, day-labourers and petty service-holders of the Civil Government. Besides, a good many of them were also employed as soldiers and policemen and as domestic servants and retainers of the nobles. This multitude are often described by the historians as "helpless masses" or "people of God" who usually looked to the upper class for protection, guidance and leadership.

In that peculiar social set-up, it was, therefore, natural that in almost every sphere of life leadership would flow from the upper to the lower classes. According to an English writer, "pride and love for the humble devotion of their dependents and terror and shame at their curses—ever filled the hearts of nobles" and these powerful emotions of the soul disposed them "to cherish and protect the flock of brethren committed to their charge". Hence, the relation between the two classes can be characterised as somewhat patriarchal or filial.

After the Battle of Plassey, a great change took place in the Governmental organisation as well as in the economic system of Bengal, which, at first slowly and later in an accelerated pace, sapped the position and prestige of the Muslim upper class. The social history of the Muslims of Bengal during the later half of the eighteenth century depicts nothing more conspicuously than the painful process of the elimination of Muslim upper class.

In A.D. 1782, Sayyid Ghulam Husain Tabatabai, the great historian, deplores the inhospitable policy of the British Government towards the upper class and the traditional aristocracy. In a police report dated A.D. 1799, the Magistrate of Dacca-Jalalpur refers to the prosperity of the Muslim upper class as a thing of the past. The sorrowful story of the impoverishment and eventual disappearance of the Muslim noble families of Bengal has been narrated with considerable precision by Sayyid Amir Ali in an article published in the *Nineteenth Century* (New York) in 1882. In his *Notes on Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal* (London, 1883), James Wise praises the remnants of the Muslim better classes as being of liberal ideas, pious disposition, respectful to all religions, and as deeply read in Arabic and Persian classics. He further describes them as considerate and charitable to the poor and especially helpful to the students. Being conscious of their family prestige, they scorned "to tell a lie or perform a mean action". "It is melancholy", Wise observes in A.D. 1883, "to contemplate the present state of the better classes of Muhammadans; for, with many excellent traits of the character they have no energy or ambition left." In the first place, they would not read European literature themselves or send their sons to the English schools, as both were considered to favour infidelity and scepticism. As a result English and modern Bengali literature (as developed in the nineteenth century) remained equally foreign to them. Secondly, instead of adapting themselves to the changes of time, they kept on lamenting that the Muslim supremacy was gone.

Before the Battle of Plassey the Muslim upper class, being the ruling group, had almost monopolised the Government services in both military and civil departments. In the process of governmental re-organisation, at first the Muslim troops were disbanded, which affected not only a significant number of Muslim officers but also tens of thousands of ordinary soldiers. Secondly, Hastings's policy of Anglicisation of revenue administration, threw many Muslim officers out of their job. Thirdly, the land revenue policy of the Government from A.D. 1772 onwards and the proceedings of the resumption of rent-free tenures (from A.D. 1798 to 1850) ruined the Muslim landed gentry. Fourthly, the abolition of the rural police in A.D. 1793, deprived thousands of Muslim policemen from their hereditary mode of employment. Thus, in the process of the establishment of British rule, the Muslim upper classes with their dependents, were not only eliminated from public service but also largely deprived of the sources of their private income.

The lower classes of the Muslims were affected by the British ascendancy in many other ways. In the first place, during the eighteenth century the main sources of income of the people were agriculture and weaving. It has been aptly said that the two most important occupations of the common Bengalis were "so happily blended together that the same hand that at one season governs the plough, at another guides the shuttle in executing those exquisite textures which are everywhere admired but can nowhere be equalled." The agricultural economy of Bengal being more or less a subsistence economy much of the prosperity of the country was dependent on the weaving industry. The destruction of the weaving interest of Bengal by the importation of Manchester goods from the last quarter of the eighteenth century rendered tens of thousands of people destitude. As a result, people were driven, by and large, to fall back on the productivity of the soil alone for earning their livelihood, and the retrogressive effect which it produced on the rural economy was disastrous.

Secondly, when the new political setup was established, the Hindu *baniyans* of Calcutta who had been serving the English merchants since long as managers and brokers (commonly known as *gomashtahs*), found themselves in a favoured position. In the salt monopoly of the East India Company and in the inland trade of the country, these *gomashtahs* played a role which not only destroyed the indigenous traders but also brought immense hardship on the masses of the people. During the later half of the eighteenth century the whole country was overrun by the *gomashtahs* of Englishmen, who monopolised markets, compelled people to purchase their goods at a high price under duress of flogging and confinement, purchased local products at low prices, arbitrated disputes like the Judges of the Court or Cutchery, forced the primary producers to accept advance money or *dadni* and to enter into contract with them to the utter disadvantage of the latter, and perpetrated many other oppressions which according to a special police report of A.D. 1762 (reproduced in H. Beveridge's *History of Bakerganj*, p. 303), were "more than can be related". The same report further adds that in this manner, the Bazar of Bakarganj, which was formerly a place of great trade, was "brought to nothing" by the daily oppressions of the *gomashtahs* of English gentlemen. In A.D. 1786, one Kalicharan, the *gomashtah* of Mr. Luke was accused of laying Tippera in ruins. Later on, when the same *gomashtah* was appointed *Diwan* or manager of revenues at Chittagong, he was accused of extorting a sum of Rs. 30,000 from the *zamindars* in a little over one year. When the case was referred to Lord Cornwallis, the Collector of Chittagong, Mr. Bird, assured the people that he would be replaced by his own *gomashtah*, Nittananda. But the matter ended by the intervention of Joynarayan Gosail, a powerful *gomashtah* of Calcutta in favour of Kalicharan. Thereafter, Mr. Bird investigated the case, met some of the petitioners, and reported that the accusations were entirely unfounded. Hence, Kalicharan continued in his post (cf. MS. *Government Document* in the possession of the present writer). The above evidence, which can be enormously multiplied, shows the intensity of depredation carried on by the Hindu *gomashtahs* in Rural Bengal under the protection of their English masters. Thus, an English officer observed, "the only class of people, which the English and their laws protect, are their own native agents and the devouring which these very agents have generated and fastened on the rural population in swarms, eat into the very heart of Indian existence".

Thirdly, Hastings's policy of lease-farming revenues to the highest bidders (A.D. 1772-1793) and Lord Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement (A.D. 1793) had far-reaching effects on the land economy of Bengal. For, on the one hand, the lease-farming system stipulated cash security which the old *zamindars* were unable to pay and the policy of leasing the *zamindaris* to the highest bidders attracted a class of speculators from among the *baniyans* (brokers of trade), *gomashtahs* (agents and managers of trading concerns), *mahajans* (money lenders) and bankers, all Hindus, who had ready money to undertake such enterprises. On the other hand, it is estimated that one-third to one-half of the *zamindaris* belonging to the old gentry was sold by the rigours of the laws provided by the Permanent Settlement which were mostly bought by the rich *parvenus* of Calcutta. Moreover, the general tendency of the Permanent Settlement was to recognise the Hindu *Naibs* and *Shiqdars* (i.e., managers and tax-collectors of the *zamindari* estates, who were in the employ of the old Muslim and Hindu *zamindars*), as landlords. An English document published in A.D. 1844, in the *Calcutta Review*, shows that out of a dozen of *zamindars*, to whom almost one whole district was parcelled out, only two belonged to the old gentry and the rest were descendants of menials of the old gentry and adventurers of the lowest extraction. The revenue policy of the British, thus effected a change, not only in the tenure of the *zamindari* but, in the process of that change, the old landed gentry was also replaced by a commercial class of Hindus and by the managers and tax-collectors of the old gentry. This effected a corresponding change in the landlord-peasant relationship. For, in spite of many faults, the old landed gentry had developed a filial affection for the masses through long and hereditary association. Hence, their mutual relationship was guided by a large measure of magnanimity. The new class of *zamindars* were, on the other hand, a class of businessmen and adventurers, who invested their capital or grasped landed property solely for reaping rich benefit out of it. In A.D. 1842, the head of the Bengal police reported that the *zamindars* did not care for anything beyond extorting all they could from their tenants by any means. He further adds that the Hindu *zamindars* of Faridpur appeared to have done everything which could degrade the Muslim peasants, their religion and even their females. An English officer characterised this change in the *Calcutta Review* of 1844, as a "loathsome revolution" which elevated a class of "miscreant adventurers" to the position of land-lords whose oppressive hands "penetrate into and devour the most secret fibres, not of political but of social and domestic existence" and to whom the old spirit of patriarchal and feudal tenderness "which protected the masses from destruction, is not known".

Fourthly, under the Muslim rule, the *zamindars* were required to keep vigilance on the anti-social elements of the rural society and were bound to produce the "robbers" and "plundered goods" in the event of any robbery being committed within their respective areas. In A.D. 1792, this rule was found to have been made *nugatory* by the new Regulations of the East India Company and the rule was abolished. Taking advantage of this new policy of the Government, the modern *zamindars* are said to have harboured colonies of roving banditti. An English document published in A.D. 1944, in the *Calcutta Review*, accuses them of employing banditti as a fixed *source of income*, which is also corroborated by the detailed report of the Magistrate of Dacca-Jalalpur (dated A.D. 1799). The latter complains that the *zamindars* protected the robbers and criminals and shared their plunder (see *Pakistan Historical Society Journal*, vol. VII, Part I, 1959, p. 24 ff.). The *zamindars* were no longer responsible to detect the robbers or bring them to book. The documents referred to above show that they themselves gave them shelter for economic gains. The English Judges and Magistrates (surrounded by a host of native law-officers, police and clerks who were often bribed by the *zamindars*) were helpless to right the wrongs: rather, by the cunning manipulation of the *zamindars*, they proved instrumental to add to the power and influence of the latter. No wonder, therefore, that the socio-economic conditions of Rural Bengal during the first half of the nineteenth century recalled to an English officer the Robespierian regime of the Revolutionary France, who says:[1].

> "It will be found that the landlords in every district of Bengal have established a reign of terror not very remotely analogous to that of the Robespierian era of the French Revolution. Its foundations are the same, viz., an unlimited command on false witnesses and a tribunal from which is practically banished every check which can distinguish a court from a butcher's shamble".

Fifthly, evidence at our disposal shows that the *raiyats* were affected in many ways by the Permanent Settlement, which not only handed the lands over to the new class of *zamindars* in perpetuity but also gave them the power of fixing up the rent. This permitted reck-renting. Moveover, the *zamindars* usually farmed out their estates to such contractors or *patnidars* who offered them the largest profit *vis-a-vis* the government dues. The *patnidars* again farmed them to *sub-patnidars* on the same conditions "till farm within farm became the order of the day, each resembling a screw over a screw, the last coming down to the tenants with the pressure of them all". Besides, a document recently recovered by the present writer from the Magistracy of Faridpur shows that not less than 23 items of "illegal cesses" were realised by the Hindu *zamindars* from the peasantry down to A.D. 1872. About A.D. 1830, Buchanon found that exaction by confinement or blows was most common and the grant of false receipt by taking advantage of the illiteracy of the *raiyat* was commonly resorted to by the agents of the *zamindars and patnidars*[2].

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[1] *Calcutta Review*, vol. 1, 1844, p. 193 ff. [2] *Cf.* M. Martin : *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*. London, 1838, vol. ii, p. 909.

Sixthly, from A.D. 1795 onwards, the Englishmen were increasingly attracted by the indigo industry of Rural Bengal; and prompted by the rush of enormous capital investment from Calcutta, indigo became the most important export product of Bengal during the early decades of the nineteenth century. About A.D. 1811, the indigo districts of Bengal, namely Dacca, Faridpur, Jessore, Rajshahi, Nadiya and Murshidabad, became dotted with indigo factories owned by Englishmen. A casual observer is liable to misjudge the effect of the large-scale introduction of indigo-industry in rural areas. He may think that it opened up many new opportunities to local people; it offered a good deal of employment to the villagers; it enriched the coffers of the village shopkeepers and of the producers of foodstuff; and, above all, the presence of so many educated persons in the rural society as managers, sub-managers and clerks, was likely to shed the light of civilisation and it could be a channel, not only for raising the standard of living in Rural Bengal but also for moral and intellectual upliftment of the mass of the people. A close examination, however, reveals that the results were otherwise. The Indigo Inquiry Commission of A.D. 1854-1860 found that indigo was obtained on a system ruinous to the peasantry. The Judge of Bakarganj reported, "however valuable indigo may be as an article of commerce, it would be better for the sake of the *raiyat* (i.e., tenants) if there was not a stick of indigo in the land". The Judge of Nadiya wrote "my idea, however, is that it is no longer enough to measure the advantages of European capital and energy by the value of our exports of indigo: the effect of the system upon the people should also be considered"[1]. For, taking advantage of their superior position and monopolistic jurisdiction over the adjoining villages of indigo factories, the European planters compelled the *raiyats* to sow indigo in the latter's own lands for a seasonal remuneration of about Rs.2¼ as rent-*cum*-wage labour. The land was chosen by the planters and the tenants were made to sow under duress even when the latter were unable or unwilling to do so. The above rate of remuneration introduced about A.D. 1795, was kept up more than half a century in course of which the price of paddy had risen at least 7 times, to which extent a *raiyat* was a loser for the cultivation of indigo instead of paddy. In the beginning the mode of indigo cultivation was simple: the seed was given free of cost by the planter, the *raiyat* sowed it in his land, cut the plant when ready for sickle and collected them in standard bundles, then on presenting the bundles to the factory, he received his due. In eighteen-twenties the mode radically changed; for, the practice of receiving advance-money or *dadni* became almost universal. In their eagerness to receive timely delivery of indigo plants, the planters forced the *raiyats* to take advance. Hence, the new mode stood as follows: the *raiyat* received the seed as before and an advance of Rs.2 per *bigha* (*i.e.*, ⅓ acre) and received the rest of the amount, i.e., ¼ rupee per *bigha*, on delivery. Even so, the Judge of Nadiya stated in A.D. 1856, that the *raiyat* did not retain more than one-half or one-third of the advances ostensibly made to them after satisfying the extortionate policy of the underlings of the planters, *i.e.*, the *gomashtahs, amins and tagadgirs*, through whom the money was paid. Besides, on account of the gross under-payment, the peasantry was driven into chronic indebtedness to the planter. The advances were, therefore, paid partly in cash and partly in writing off the unliquidated balances of the past years. The Judge of Nadiya saw one case in which the *raiyat* received ½ rupee in cash and 6½ rupees were adjusted against old balances for the cultivation of 3½ *bighas* of land. Judge C. Steer says, "every honest planter will admit that no Ryot will take advance unless he is in the last extremity", and none ever gets out of "the Planter's book" who is "once" in it. For, "both planters and *Mahajans* (money-lenders) act in the same way—both take advantage of the *Ryot's* necessities and both derive a usurious profit from their dealings". Moreover, as the debt-roll was taken over from father to son in case of former's death or absconding, "the chronic state of indebtedness" of the *raiyats* became a source of "hereditary irritation against the Planters."

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[1] *Cf. Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal. No. xxxiii, part I, Papers Related to Indigo Cultivation in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1860, p. i ff.

Thus, as the policy of revenue farming and the Permanent Settlement attracted the parvenus of Calcutta, so also the indigo industry attracted the English capitalists for enormous capital investment, which brought about almost a complete transformation of the rural economy, and in the process of this transformation the old landed gentry, who were protectors and patrons of the people, were overthrown by a commercial class of men, Hindu and European, whose minds were saturated by the desire for easy gain and who, being adventurers in this field, were unmindful to the old filial tenderness in their dealings with the teeming multitude. The old gentry being eliminated, the lower classes stood deprived of leadership and protection and groaned helplessly under the oppressive and extortionate policy of the *gomashtahs*, modern Hindu *Zamindars* and European indigo planters. The intense and widespread discontent which, thus, accumulated among the mass of the people naturally created a tense situation in Rural Bengal during the early decades of the nineteenth century, which found outlet in occasional affrays and agitation against the above three classes of oppressors[1].

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[1] It may be noted that the effects of the Permanent Settlement and Indigo Industry on rural Bengal have been carefully examined in my thesis, "A History of the *Fara'idi* Movement in Bengal" submitted recently to the Dacca University, on which the above observations are based. Considerable help also taken from the Ph. D. thesis of Dr. A. R. Mallick, of the Rajshahi University entitled, "Development of the Muslims of Bengal and Bihar with special reference to their education" (unpublished), with the kind permission of the author.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS REVIVALISM

(1818—1870)

It may be noted that Islam was brought to Bengal by a handful of Muslim traders, *sufi* missioneries and conquerors and its rank and file was swelled by local converts[1]. In the process of this socio-religious expansion, certain local beliefs and practices had imperceptively crept into the Muslim society, which hedged round the fundamental teachings and institutions of Islam.

So long as the Muslims held the political supremacy, they were economically well off or, at least, satisfied with their pecuniary circumstances. Under such conditions they were also able to hold cultural and intellectual superiority and things went on as usual, so that hardly any necessity was felt to purge the Muslim society of un-Islamic elements. But, once the political power was lost, their economy suffered, and the loss of economic prosperity was bound to cast baneful effect on their social and religious life. Naturally, a feeling gradually gained ground among the Muslims that their political decadence was mainly due to their deviation from the original teachings of Islam. Hence, some religious leaders thought it their sacred duty to revive Islamic tradition in its pristine form and to purge the Muslim society of superstitious beliefs and practices.

The first person to introduce this trend of Islamic revivalism or socio-religious reform in Bengal, was Haji Shariat Allah (A.D. 1781-1840). The reform movement started by the Haji in A.D. 1818, became very popular among the masses of Eastern Bengal during the nineteenth century and came to be known as the *Fara'idi* movement. The next person to bring the message of Islamic revivalism to Bengal was Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, who arrived at Calcutta in A.D. 1820 and again in 1822. His reform movement was known as *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah* (wrongly called Indian Wahhabism), and was popularised among the masses of West Bengal by Mir Nithar Ali *alias* Titu Mir from A.D. 1827 to 1831 and by Mawlawi Inayat Ali of Patna from A.D. 1831 onwards. These religious reform movements are reputed by contemporary writers to have brought about the greatest socio-religious revolution ever known in Bengal[1]. In the present study we are, however, concerned only with their impact on the common man and with the role they played in the process of mass awakening in Bengal.

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[1] For details see Dr. Abdul Karim : *Social History of the Muslims of Bengal down to A.D. 1538*, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, 1959

At the beginning, both *Fara'idi* and *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah* movements aimed at introducing socio-religious reform and their characteristic peculiarities consisted of (*i*) mass-contact or a clarion call to the masses to come to the help of Islam by purifying their character and by purging the society of un-Islamic innovations; and (*ii*) emphasis on the unity, brotherhood and equality of all Muslims. In the impoverished, leaderless and imflamable society of the nineteenth century, the above concepts of reform created tremendous appeal, and the response from the masses was immediate and spontaneous.

According to contemporary sources, the *Fara'idi* movement spread with extraordinary rapidity in Eastern Bengal during the life-time of its founder, Haji Shariat Allah. In 1820, when Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, the founder of the *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah*, arrived at Calcutta, the masses flocked to him in such numbers that, according to Hunter, he was unable even to go through the ceremony of initiation by clasping the hand of each person. "Unrolling his turban, therefore, he declared that all who could touch any part of its ample length became his disciple"[1]. The *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah* movement soon took a political turn because of its involvement in a holy war or *jihad* campaign against the Sikhs of the Punjab, which became its dominant feature from A.D. 1826. From A.D. 1831 to 1860, it also split up into several successor movements. Thus, its influence was exerted on the masses of Bengal in several phases, *viz*., (i) religio-political phase led by Sayyid Ahmad Shahid (A.D. 1820-1831) which embarked on a holy war or *jihad* against the usurpers of Muslim dominions, (ii) socio-economic phase led by Titu Mir (A.D. 1827 to 1831) in West Bengal, (iii) religious reform with a bias to *Hanafi madhhab* led by Mawlana Karamat Ali of Jawnpur (A.D. 1835-1873) and (iv) religious reform with a bias against sectarian schools or *madhhab* called *Ahl-i-Hadith* (A.D. 1860 onwards).

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[1]. These Islamic revivalist movements have been discussed elaborately in my thesis referred to above.

The *Fara'idi* movement had drawn its supporters mainly from the peasantry of Eastern Bengal, especially where Hindu *zamindars* were powerful, and through continuous involvement with the Hindu *zamindars* and European indigo planters, it gradually developed a socio-economic bias. This last aspect of the *Fara'idi* movement became the dominant feature from A.D. 1838 onwards in the hands of Dudu Miyan, son of Haji Shariat Allah. The socio-economic phase of *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah*, led by Titu Mir assumed, in the like manner, a mass movement in West Bengal on account of its upholding the rights of the Muslim peasantry against the oppression and extortion of the Hindu *zamindars* and European indigo planters (A.D. 1830-1831).

Moreover, Sayyid Ahmad Shahid had regarded the British and Sikh regimes of Indo-Pakistan sub-continent as *Dar al-Harb* (*i.e.*, abode of war), and focussed attention on the necessity of waging a holy war or *jihad* against the usurpers of Muslim dominions in order to regain the lost power and prestige of Islam. The only alternative to *jihad* was, in his view *hijrat* or emigration to *Dar al-Islam*, *i.e.*, a country ruled by the Muslims. This trend was continued by Mawlawi Wilayat Ali and Mawlawi Inayat Ali of Patna and their followers in a mass scale in Bengal from A.D. 1831 to 1870, as is revealed by a number of Government records recently recovered by the present writer[1]. A number of booklets published from Dacca in Bengali and Urdu by the followers of the Sayyid, propounded that whosoever did not accept the alternatives of *jihad* and *hijrat* were enemies of God.

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[1] W. W. Hunter : *Our Indian Musalmans*, p. 13.

Haji Shariat Allah also regarded Bengal under the British rule as injurious to the spiritual life of the Muslims; as, according to him the absence of Muslim administrators deprived the Muslims the privilege of holding the congregational prayers of *Jum'ah* and *'Id*. Hence, although he did not feel himself strong enough to declare a holy war against the British, he suspended the prayers of *Jum'ah* and *'Id* until such times when Muslim administration might be established. These prayers were revived by the *Fara'idis* after independence in 1947.

Thus, the religious propaganda of the *Fara'idis* and the followers of *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah* awakened the people to the supreme need of driving away the usurpers of the Muslim dominions, and the involvement of the socio-economic phases of the two movements led by Titu Mir and Dudu Miyan, demonstrated the necessity of organising the masses of the rural areas into unified bodies for their social and economic security. In this context, it may, therefore, be noted that while these religious reform movements generally tended to fill up the vacuum in leadership, created by the elimination of the Muslim upper class, their socio-economic phases also provided a platform for the peasant agitation against the *zamindars* and indigo planters.

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[1] Presently being edited for publication by the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca.

Titu Mir came in conflict with the Hindu *zamindars* in course of his propagation of the religious reform doctrines of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid in West Bengal. For. a section of the Muslims detested the puritanism of Titu Mir and his followers; but being unable to check the growth of his reform movement, sought the help of the *zamindars* in A.D. 1830. Ram Narayan (*zamindar* of Taragonia), Gaur Prasad Chowdhury (*zamindar* of Nagarpur), and Krishna Dev Ray (*zamindar* of Purwa or Punrah) were already alarmed by the growing influence of Titu Mir and on hearing the complaints they took concerted step to crush the new movement in the bud. They imposed a "beard-tax" at the rate of Rs.2½ per head[1] on the followers of Titu Mir. This heavy tax was actually realised in Purwa, but in Safdarpur (where Titu Mir's followers were strong) the *zamindars* met with resistance. Rather, the Muslim peasantry of Safdarpur challenged the right of the *zamindars* to levy such an illegal cess, which also went against the religious feelings of the Muslims. The movement of Titu Mir thus turned into a socio-economic struggle between the Muslim peasantry and Hindu *zamindars*, which was fought, at first, in the legal courts and later in the open field, in which the European indigo planters combined their forces with their natural allies, the *zamindars*. In affrays that were fought between the two parties, Titu Mir won a clear victory. But he was allured into a political trap by the machination of the *zamindars* and planters who coloured him as a rebel against the Government. As a result, he was crushed by a military expedition from Calcutta in A.D. 1831.

The annihilation of Titu Mir and his followers did not, however, remove the cause of discontent among the peasantry. The spirit of reformation and of revolt against oppression, which he stood for, undoubtedly survived. In his violent death, he became even more

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It may be noted that in 1834, rice was selling at the rate of 4 maunds per rupee.

widely known than in his life time, and his martyrdom became symbolic of his ideals and a lasting source of inspiration to the peasantry of Bengal in their subsequent struggle against the oppressions of the *zamindars* and indigo planters[1].

The socio-economic phase of the *Fara'idi* movement was shaped by similar incidents. Its founder, Haji Shariat Allah came in conflict with the Hindu *zamindars* of Dacca district in A.D. 1831, while he was preaching his doctrines of puritanism, unity and brotherhood at Nayabari. At first, some Muslims of the locality opposed him, then he was expelled from the place by the Hindu *zamindars,* who apprehended danger at the growing unity of the *Fara'idi* peasantry. The Haji silently fell back to his native village, Shamail in the Madaripur subdivision (then in the district of Bakarganj and now in the district of Faridpur) and avoided any further conflict with the powerful *zamindars* until A.D. 1838, when his son Dudu Miyan succeeded in organising a net-work of affray parties and took a firm stand against the Hindu *zamindars* and opposed payment of illegal and idolatrous cesses imposed by them on the Muslim peasantry, such as, cesses for *Durga puja, Kali puja, etc.* In course of his struggle with the *zamindars,* Dudu Miyan came also in conflict with the indigo planters, who sided with the *zamindars* against him. A series of affrays, fought between the two parties from A.D. 1841 to 1846, gave Dudu Miyan a clear superiority over the combined strength of the *zamindars* and indigo planters. Being repeatedly defeated in the contest of physical power, the *zamindars* and indigo planters endeavoured to shut up Dudu Miyan in the Jail with the help of Police Officers. But every time he was accused before the law courts, he acted so tactfully that he was invariably released.

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[1]. For details see my article "The Struggle of Titu Mir : a re-examination," in the Journal *of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan,* vol. iv, 1959 (now in the Press).

The amazing success of Titu Mir within a very short time (from A.D. 1827 to 1831) in organising the peasantry of 24-Parganas and Nadiya (in West Bengal) into a formidable block against the Hindu *zamindars* and European indigo planters, demonstrated for the first time the intensity of discontent of the peasanty against these two classes of exploiters as well as the general demand for efficient leadership. In other words, it showed the fundamental symptoms of a mass agitation and it may be said that from his time the peasant agitation of Bengal had come into being, which was to dominate the life and thought of the masses for nearly half-a-century. The struggle of the *Fara'idi* peasantry against the *zamindars* and indigo planters from A.D. 1838 onwards and the intense peasant agitation all over Bengal against the indigo planters from A.D. 1854 to 1860 (as is recorded by the Indigo Inquiry Commission of 1854-1860), represent new outlets through which this discontent found expression. In the broader context of the peasant agitation of Bengal, the socio-economic movements led by Titu Mir and Dudu Miyan, therefore, represent organised attempts of tens of thousands of peasantry, brought to a common platform by a new awakening and by religious and doctrinal ties, to get rid of the oppressions and extortions, to which they were subjected by the new class of gentry, *i.e.*, the Hindu *zamindars* and European indigo planters. The great popularity gained by these two leaders indicates that the type of leadership provided by them, answered the demand of the time. Moreover, as the followers of Titu Mir and Dudu Miyan came almost exclusively from the lower strata of the people to which they themselves belonged, their movements also indicate the growth of leadership from among the mass of the people themselves, as the requisite leadership was not forthcoming from the upper class.

The new upsurge of the peasant agitation is best illustrated in the indigo riots as recorded by the Indigo

Inquiry Commission of A.D. 1854-1860. Lieutenant-Governor J. P. Grant's experience in A.D. 1860, in course of a visit to Sirajganj in the district of Pabna through the rivers, Kumar and Kaliganga, is also noteworthy. He says that on his up-journey "numerous crowds of *ryots* (tenants) appeared at various places whose sole prayer was for an order of the Government that they should not cultivate indigo"; and on his return journey, a few days later, he was surprised to find two rows of continuous lines of men, women and children standing on both sides of the two rivers for 60 to 70 miles "claiming justice" in matters of indigo cultivation. This remarkable demonstration of tens of thousands of peasantry and their capacity of "instantaneous combination" over such a vast areas, showed not only the dimension of their woes and miseries but also their growing self-consciousness. Lord Canning wrote, "I assure you that for about a week, it [this demonstration] caused me more anxiety than I have had since the days of Delhi [*i.e.*, the great revolt of 1857-58]; and from that day I feel that a short fired in anger or fear by one foolish planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flames".

Thus, whereas James Wise characterised the Muslim peasantry of Bengal as "apathetic and careless" in A.D. 1820, and regarded Haji Shariat Allah's rousing them to enthusiasm as more than extraordinary achievement, the amaging sense of unity and mass-consciousness demonstrated by them in A.D. 1860, was a significant development. The above evidence further shows that the credit for this singular achievement in the field of mass-awakening goes mainly to the protagonists of religious reform, which could not have been possible but for their ability to exploit efficiently and systematically the existing mass-discontent among the peasantry.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLT OF 1857

While the *jihad* movement and the peasant agitation were in full swing, a greater outburst, slowly but steadily, was brewing in the minds of the down-trodden people of Indo-Pak sub-continent, which was to shake the British Indian empire violently at the roots. The protagonists of Islamic revivalism had awakened a sense of resistance among the Muslims against the British regime and had also given wide publicity to the prophecy of Shah Nimat Allah(believed to have lived in A.H. 570/ A.D. 1174), who visualised the possibility of restoration of power to the Muslims in this sub-continent during the nineteenth century. The prophecies of Nimat Allah, which enumerated great future events of Asia and Europe for over eight centuries from A.H. 570 to 1380, were believed by the Muslims with a religious fervour, and his prophecy with regard to the condition of this subcontinent in the nineteenth century was construed to coincide with the centenary of the Battle of Plassey. According to a contemporary writer, in the Spring of 1857, it was ascertained that "a paper was in the circulation among the natives, purporting to be a prophecy made by a *Punjabi fakeer* seven hundred years ago, to the effect that the *Nazarines* or Christians should hold power in India for one hundred years" and, thereafter, would be expelled. The prophecies of Shah Nimat Allah composed in fine Persian poems have been found in several geneologies of old families in Bengal and its Bengali and Urdu translations are in wide circulation down to the present day.

Contemporary evidences indicate that the year A.D. 1857 received special attention from the Englishmen as well as from the Muslims of this sub-continent, as the centenary of the Battle of Plassey. In the early part of the year a meeting in London decided to celebrate it by erecting a statue of Clive at his native town Shropshire. According to English sources, the year was also marked out by the Muslims of this sub-continent, for the celebration of the centenary "by no less an achievement, indeed, than the expulsion of the British and the revival of Moslem power". The proceedings of the Sepoy trials and other evidences collected by the English authorities convinced them that "a great movement was planned for the middle of the year 1857", of which the Government previously "knew nothing and suspected little". It is not possible in this brief study to go into the details of the great revolt when it burst in all its fury throughout northern and eastern regions of this sub-continent. Suffice it to quote the Lieutenant-Governor, who reported, "it will thus be seen that hardly a single district under the Government of Bengal has escaped either actual danger or the serious apprehension of danger".

There is a virtual unanimity of opinions that the great revolt of A.D. 1857-58 did not touch the Bengali Hindus, educated or uneducated, though the Bengali Muslims were deeply affected. On the whole, its consequence was disastrous to the Muslims of this sub-continent, as will be evident from the following observations of Sir Alfred C. Lyall, who says:[1]

> "All this spirit of unrest was brooding over India when the great mutiny broke out among our Hindu Sepoys. In Delhi, Lucknow and other centres of disaffection, the Mahomedans at once caught the contagion of rebellion, and almost immediately seized the lead of it, using the wild aimless fury of the soldiery for their own compact and straight political designs. The consequence was, as all who were in Northern India in 1857-58 can recollect, that the English turned fiercely on the Mahomedans as upon their real enemies and most dangerous rivals; so that the failure of the revolt was much more disastrous to them than to the Hindus".

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[1]. Alfred C. Lyall : *Asiatic Studies, Religious and Social*, London, 1884, P.P. 239-40.

He adds further that from this date, the Muslims not only lost "almost all their remaining prestige or traditional superiority over Hindus" but also forfeited the confidence of their foreign rulers. Thereafter they were burdened with a heavy task of recovering the ground which was cut from under them when they made that last desperate spring after the shadow of a lost empire. This historical retrospect, according to Sir Lyall, was necessary in order to bring out the prospective of the nineteenth century "religious temper of the Mahomedans" which was a reflection of their political and social misfortune.

Nevertheless, in the broader historical perspective, the revolt of 1857-58 represents a supreme attempt of the old society, *i.e.*, the disaffected nobles, deposed officials, deprived *zamindars* and *talukdars* to overthrow the new order established by the British with the help of the rebel sepoys. It aimed at re-establishing the old order. In other words, the ideal for which they fought was to liberate the country from foreign usurpers and to re-instate the old political order which recognised their moral values and personal honour. Hence, there was no question of religious differences or sectarian interest; the Muslims as well as the Hindus fought shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy. In the history of the Muslim rule over this sub-continent, the Mughals represented a peculiar blend of Indian culture in which the Muslim and the Hindu civilizations co-existed in peace and harmony. The old social system which was known to all was, therefore, the Mughal social system. Hence, the plan of the fighters was to restore authority to the *Delhi Badshah* and through him to the local princes[1].

Thus, as the religious reform movements of the Muslims represented an attempt on the part of their society to reorganise it on a sounder basis in order to regain its lost glory, so also the revolt of 1857-58, represented a convulsive effort of the old India against the new system established by the British. Hence, the colossal failure of the Indian arms and strategy in 1857-58, also forecast the ultimate failure of the Muslim religious reform movements to regain power on the old basis.

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[1]. cf. Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani : "The character of 1857 struggle" in *Pakistan Observer* (Daily), *Sunday Magazine*, Dacca, 12th May 1957, p.5.

A new basis was, therefore, to be found out for the progress and amelioration of the Muslims, and this was found in the example of the Bengali Hindus. It may be noted that the ascendency of the British brought a different type of impact on the Hindus of Bengal. During the Muslim rule, the management of finances were largely left to their hands; especially banking and internal trade were more or less their monoploy. Even before the Battle of Plassey, many Hindu businessmen had taken managerial jobs under the East India Company and were known as *gomashtahs*. Their frequent intercourse with the Englishmen made them acquainted with English language. After the Battle of Plassey, they took to its learning in right earnest, as the language of the new rulers offered a good prospect for employment. Moreover, unlike the Muslims, they could easily reconcile themselves with English language, which was no more foreign or offensive to them than the Persian language. Deeper knowledge in English eventually brought to their doors the shining light of Western civilisation. Hence, an eminent Hindu historian of our time can easily discern in the fall of the Mughal civilisation at Plassey, the beginning of a "glorious dawn, the like of which the history of the world has not seen elsewhere"[1]. In this peculiar historical process, the Hindus of Bengal with their modern education, not only became the collaborators of the British hegemony but also marched ahead of all others while the Muslims sank deeper and deeper into the abyss of poverty, ignorance and superstition.

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[1] J. N. Sarkar, ed. : *History of Bengal*, vol. ii, Dacca University, 1948, p. 497 ff.

After the revolt of 1857-58, (while the *jihad* movement was still hovering on the horizon of life and thought of the Muslim masses) the enlightened Muslim middle class, which was slowly raising its head in Bengal and elsewhere, realised the pressing need for reconciling the Muslim subjects to their foreign rulers and *vice versa*, and to equip them with modern education in order to evolve a constitutional principle of progress in the Muslim society as the Hindus of Bengal had done since more than half a century back. In this new outlook is to be found the birth of modernism among the Muslims of Bengal.

CHAPTER IV

CONSTITUTIONAL STRUGGLE : MUSLIM MODERNISM AND LOYALISM

(1857-1913)

Muslim modernism, Khilafat movement and Pakistan movement from A.D. 1857 to 1947, represent the constitutional struggle for freedom which culminated in the achievement of Pakistan. A close examination of these movements reveals a trend of Muslim political thought which was called forth by the self-preservative spirit of the Muslim community. The political experience of the Muslim leaders in their dealings with the British as well as with the Hindu leaders often came in sharp conflict with their ideal cravings. Hence, quite often they were compelled by circumstances to revise their policies and change their political standpoints. In many instances new policies had to be moulded out of the abyss of desperate situation. Indeed, the Muslims were slow in realising their real position in the peculiar socio-political and geographical set-up of Indo-Pakistan sub-continent after the loss of their political power. Even so, if they took a century to realise the real impact of the western civilization (A.D. 1757-1857), they took nearly the same length of time to realise their exact socio-political position in relation to the Hindus (A.D. 1857 to 1940).

Nevertheless, once the Muslim leaders were able to decide and rightly interpret the mass-sentiment in the historic Pakistan Resolution of 1940, the Muslim masses stood solidly behind them, which rendered the achievement of Pakistan irresistable even in spite of later strong opposition of some of the most prominent Muslim leaders of Bengal, Punjab, Sind and North-West Frontier.

Prior to the revolt of 1857-58, all traits of Modernism were considered taboo by the Muslims. Even English education was regarded as an act of infidelity. The main reason for this antipathy may be found in the psychology of the Muslims of that time. For, the gradual decadence of the Muslim political power throughout the world from the second half of the eighteenth century was generally regarded as caused by their deviation from the original teachings of Islam. In this subcontinent and elsewhere, therefore, they pinned their hopes with the religious reform movements for the recovery of their power and prestige. Thus, it is natural that so long as there had remained the faintest hope for the success of these movements, they would attach themselves both physically and spiritually to these reform movements. Hence, modernism in Bengal as well as in Northern India could take root in the Muslim society only after the passing of the great revolt, in which the failure of the Muslim arms and strategy falsified, partially if not entirely, this pious hope of the Muslims.

The fact that modernism did not make any headway in the Muslim society of Bengal before the great revolt though its leader Nawab Abd al-Latif, was in the field since long "exhorting, supplicating, entreating and earnestly appealing to his co-religionist to give their sons an English education if they wanted to hold their own in competition with the Hindus"—testifies to the above view. This was especially so, as a network of English schools had sprung up throughout Bengal under the patronage of the European missionaries and enlightened Hindus during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Muslim modernism, Khilafat movement and Pakistan movement were, however, all-Indo-Pakistan-wide movements and affected all parts of the sub-continent equally. This helped the growth of Muslim national consciousness. Although throughout these struggles, the Muslims of Bengal played a prominent role, there is little scope to treat them regionally. These movements are, therefore, examined in their broader perspective from Bengal's point of view.

Muslim Modernism

The main objects of Muslim modernism were, in the first place, to effect a rapprochement between the Muslim subjects and the English rulers. Secondly, to educate the Muslims in European arts and sciences in order to enable them to participate in the benefit of the new system set up by the British Government. Thirdly, to ease the feelings of the Muslims in accepting the new order of life by promoting a policy of loyalty to the British, and also to allay thereby the suspicion of the Englishmen towards the Muslims. Fourthly, to catch up with the Hindus of Bengal in the above directions who had gone far ahead of the Muslims in the process of Westernisation.

As the Muslim modernism was the aftermath of the great revolt, when the belated realisation of the need for modernising the society dawned upon the Muslims, it dawned as an all-Indo-Pakistan phenomenon. Hence, a co-ordinated and unified movement was possible, and this was achieved by the mutual collaboration of Nawab Abd al-Latif and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the two most prominent personalities of the time. In A.D. 1863, Sir Sayyid travelled to Calcutta to meet the Nawab and to deliver a lecture on the necessity of learning English language and modern philosophy, arts and sciences in the Mahomedan Literary Society established by the Nawab and his colleagues. On the other hand, when Sir Sayyid established Scientific Society at Aligarh, the Nawab was appointed one of the members of its Directive Council. While unveiling the marble bust of Nawab Abd al-Latif at the Senate House of the Calcutta University in 1915, the then Vice-Chancellor observed, "Bengali Mohamedans owe him as great a debt of gratitude, if not greater, as Up Country Mohamedans do to Sir Syed Ahmad, who devoted himself to similar work about the same time in the United Provinces and the Punjab. One was the other's worthy co-adjutor and colleague. Each inspired the other." From the very beginning. Muslim modernism was, thus, an all-Indo-Pakistan movement with centres at Calcutta. Aligarh and Lahore.

Unfortunately, the present East Pakistanis know very little about Nawab Abd al-Latif, one of their greatest benefactors. He was born in A.D. 1828 in the district of Faridpur and died at Calcutta on the 10th July, 1893. In the words of H.J. Cotton, the late Nawab was a self-made man and owed his position in life to his own exertions. "Of highly respectable but comparatively humble origin (*i.e.*, born of Qadi family), he rose from being a teacher in a Madrasah to be a leader of his countrymen and one of the most prominent public man of the day". He served in many Government Commissions of wide and far-reaching importance. "He was one of the civic representatives of Calcutta for thirty years, and a fellow of the Calcutta University for a like period; thrice he was appointed a Member of the Bengal Legislative Council".

He came to Calcutta at an early age, received his education at the Calcutta Madrasah and thereafter appointed Professor of English in the same institution. In A.D. 1849, he was appointed a Deputy Magistrate. In recognition of his merit in public service and benevolent activities, the title of "Nawab" was conferred upon him in A.D. 1880. Three years later he received the Order of Companion of the Indian Empire and in A.D. 1887, he was invested with the dignity of "Nawab Bahadur". According to sources close to him, from A.D. 1859 to the date of his death, he was "always foremost in every good work which would tend to ameliorate the condition and advance the prospect of his countrymen. In all public movements and proceedings, he preeminently represented the Mahomedan community in this metropolis". At the time of erecting his bust at the Senate House there were no two opinions among the Muslims, Hindus and Englishmen who participated in the function in 1915 that "he did more to encourage the progress of education among Mahomedans than any other in Bengal". According to Sir W.C. Petheram, he was a man who early realised the fact that being affected by the rapid means of communication, especially with other parts of the world, things in this subcontinent was rapidly changing and alongside wants and wishes of men were changing too. In other words, he found himself and his generation in a world of progress. Hence, he also realised that the young men of this country must receive a proper type of education in order to obtain the benefits which are open to the modern man as well as in order to compete successfully in the wide world and to take their proper places therein. He, however, found his co-religionists "backward in modern education", not so much because of their incompetence, as it was because of "a prejudice amongst them, which prevented them from taking the advantage of the means of education which were taken advantage of by other communities". He, therefore, devoted his whole life to remove that self-destructive prejudice from the minds of his bretheren and to secure for them a modern education. Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee repeatedly observed that to Nawab Abd al-Latif belonged the unique honour of being pioneer of English education among the Muslims of Bengal. Likewise, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee regarded him as one of the greatest benefactors of the Muslim community in Bengal who had done more than anyone else for the promotion of Western and Eastern learning among his co-religionists. Sir Ashutosh also regarded him as a truly patriotic person who deserved the gratitude of generations to come.

As early as A.D. 1853, Nawab Abd al-Latif declared a prize for the best essay on "how far would be inculcation of European sciences through the medium of English language benefit Mahomedan students in the present circumstances of India, and what are the most practicable means for imparting such instruction?" In A.D. 1863, he organised the Mahomedan Literary Society at Calcutta with a view to educate public opinion in favour of modern education and modern scholarship and to bring the enlightened Muslims, Hindus and Englishmen in harmony and in closer intercourse for mutual benefit. Moreover, in order to minimise pecuniary hardship of the Muslim students, he collected donations and pooled a portion of the proceeds of Muhsin endowment fund by means of which two-thirds of their tuition fees could be covered. As a matter of fact, by dint of his undaunted and life-long labour, Nawab Abd al-Latif raised the Mahomedan Literary Society into a powerful forum for the social, cultural and intellectual progress of the Muslims, which survived as the most important nerve centre of the Muslims of Bengal down to A.D. 1930 under the name of Muslim Institute of Calcutta.

Another Bengali Muslim who gave an added impetus to Muslim modernism was Sayyid Amir Ali, a young associate of Nawab Abd al-Latif. Amir Ali was born in A.D. 1847 at Hughli in West Bengal. In A.D. 1879, he founded the Central Muhammadan Association in collaboration with the Nawab with the object of making the Muslims conscious of their modern responsibilities. In A.D. 1881, he was nominated to the Bengal Legislative Council and later to the Imperial Council. At the beginning of the present century he was appointed a Privy Councillor. He settled in London and organised the London branch of All India Muslim League in A.D. 1910. He died in 1929.

In the context of Muslim modernism, it may be recalled that in A.D. 1857, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan founded a Persian School for historical research at Muradabad. In A.D. 1863, he organised the Ghazipur Scientific Society with the object of producing Urdu translation of European scientific works, which was later transferred to Aligarh. In A.D. 1864, he founded a High School at Ghazipur with provision for English courses. In A.D. 1873, he founded another High

School at Aligarh, which was raised to Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (M.A.O. College) in 1875, with the object of training Muslim students in modern scientific education with an Islamic orientation in their life and thought. Moreover, in A.D. 1872, he organised a "conference for the better diffusion and advancement of learning among Muhammadans of India" and created a fund to help Muslim scholars in research work. Haunted by the terrors of the great revolt of 1857-58, he also organised the British Indian Association to keep the Muslims within reasonable bounds in practical politics.

Thus, Nawab Abd al-Latif (A.D. 1828-1893) and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (A.D. 1817-1898), were the chief architects of Muslim modernism in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, who not only fought their way against the traditional conservatism but by dint of their towering personality, mature understanding and ceaseless effort, also succeeded in giving a healthy direction to the thought and activity of the Muslims. During the later half of the nineteenth century, they dominated the scene of public life and forged a new outlook for the younger generation in accordance with the exigency of the time. The policy through which this change was effected is generally referred to as "loyalism" which is considered below.

Loyalism.

We have seen that the religious reform movements had fostered a tremendous mass-consciousness among the Muslims of Bengal; and as in their ultimate aim they edged round regaining the lost power, they had also fostered a sense of antagonism to the British Government and a warring mentality towards the Englishmen. In this context, it may also be noticed that although the failure of the great revolt proved the repugnance of the political aspirations of these religious reform movements, the spirit of *jihad* or holy war fanned by them against the usurpers of the Muslim dominion, remained undaunted. For, this subcontinent under the British rule was declared *Dar al-Harb* (*i.e.*, abode of war) and waging *jihad* against the usurpers of Muslim dominion was regarded as a religious obligation. Hence, a continuous *jihad* campaign was kept up in the North-West Frontier against the British from A.D. 1863 to 1870, in which the Bengali Muslims played a prominent role by constant supply of men and money.

Furthermore, against the background of the great revolt several educational and religious movements, such as Deoband movement (A.D. 1858 onwards), had arisen in Northern India, which viewed the Western penetration into this subcontinent as a religious challenge of Christianity to Islam. Hence, the protagonists of these movements (who were mostly conservative *'Ulama*), aimed at preserving Muslim culture through the spread of classical religious education. Being apprehensive of the infiltration of Christian influence into the Muslim society, the *Ulama* preached vehemently against Western education and Western culture.

The first and the foremost problem before the promoters of modernism was, therefore, to divert the attention of the Muslims from *jihad* to the necessity of equipping themselves for social, cultural and intellectual progress, which needed acquisition of modern education and a reconciliation between the "rulers and the ruled". In other words, in order to be able to participate in the benefits of the new order, the younger generation had to be psychologically and materially prepared. This, as Sir Syyid Ahmed Khan and Nawab Abd al-Latif conceived, could be done only by fostering a sense of loyalty to the established Government. Hence, both of them set "loyalism" as the immediate goal of their efforts. In this narrow or immediate sense, loyalism can be calculated as a two-edged policy. For, it endeavoured to remove the concept of *jihad* against the established Government on the one hand, and to convince the

Government of the honest disposition of the Muslims towards the British Crown as well as towards the overall prosperity of this country on the other.

In pursuance of this policy, Sir Sayyid wrote (i) *Risalah-i-Khayr Khwahan-i-Musalman* (translated into English under the caption *An Account of the Loyal Mahomedans of India*, Meerut, A.D. 1860), (ii) *The Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible or Taby'in al-Kalam fi Tafsir al-Tawrat wa'l Injil 'ala Millat al Islam* (Ghazeepore, A.D. 1862) and (iii) *Ahkam-i Ta'am-i-Ahl-i-Kitab* (*i.e.*, dietary rules of Islam with regard to dining with the followers of the Book, being a justification of the permissibility to dine with the Christians and Jews). In these works, he pleaded vigorously for a reconciliation between the Muslims and the Christian rulers and to show that in the social sense, the *Ahl-i-Kitab*, *i.e.*, the Christians and the Jews were not different from the Muslims. Likewise, Nawab Abd al-Latif endeavoured to reconcile the Muslims to the Bengali Hindus and Englishmen. In A.D. 1915, the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University observed that the Nawab Bahadur's high social qualities "endeared him to Hindus, Mahomedans and Europeans alike and there was hardly a household of note and culture where on ceremonial and festive occasions, he was not a familiar figure". H. J. Cotton says that the Nawab "devoted himself with characteristic assiduity and with a success, which would have been impossible in one less gifted by natural grace and dignity of manner, to establish cordial and friendly relations between both Mahomedans and Hindus, and Mahomedans and their European fellow-subjects." This, in his opinion, was the most distinguished service which the Nawab rendered to the Muslim community of Bengal.

The line of argument pursued by Sir Sayyid and the Nawab in their justification of the policy of loyalty to the

British Government, however, slightly differed. This policy, as we have seen, stemmed from the exigency of the time; and these two enunciators of modernism appear to have realised the fact that under the then existing peculiar political circumstances it was well-neigh impossible for the Muslims to drive away the British by force of arms. Hence, the only course to raise the Muslims from their fallen and degraded position to that of honour and prestige and to set them once again on the path of progress, was to equip them with the intellectual weapon of a modern education and bring them in harmony with the established Government. The opponents of modernism and reconciliation, on the other hand, had advanced the argument that this subcontinent, which was formerly a country of the Muslims (*i.e., Dar al-Islam* or abode of Islam) was turned into *Dar al-Harb, i.e.,* the abode of war, by the usurpation of the infidels. Hence, it follows that it was the religious duty of every Muslim—men, women and children to wage *jihad* against the British and to drive them away from this country, provided the Muslims could gather necessary equipment for such a war. Those conservatives who discouraged an open war, did so only because of the insufficiency of equipment. This was a formidable argument based on a knotty question of law, which could not be refuted satisfactorily on legal grounds. Hence, even under peaceful condition, the Muslims were psychologically at war with the British, which proved a stumbling block to modernism. In the beginning, both Nawab Abd al-Latif and Sir Sayyid, therefore, tried to veil the questions of *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*, the former, by emphasising the friendly relations that existed at that time between the Turkish *Sultan-Khalifah* and the British Crown; and the latter, by diverting the attention of the Muslims to the new prospect of gaining consitutional "liberty" and "Parliamentary democracy" under the British rule.

The Nawab argued that since the British Crown was a sincere friend of the Turkish *Sultan-Khalifah* and as the former had the good wishes of the latter, it was unlawful to wage war against the friend of the *Khalifah*. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, (in spite of his great admiration for the Turkish empire and his adoption of the Turkish dress), detested the above arguments, probably, either because of his apprehension that the cordial relations between Great Britain and Turkey may not exist for long or because he was afraid of reviving a religious spirit in politics which might surreptitiously encourage the warring mentality among the Muslims and thereby mar the progress of modernism. Hence, instead of finding a religious basis for loyalism, he endeavoured to give it a purely political content.

In his *Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind* (or the causes of the Indian rebellion), written just after the revolt of 1857-58, Sir Sayyid argued that the main cause of this revolt was the absence of Indo-Pakistani representative in the Indian Legislative Council who could work as intermediary between the Government and the people and the consequent lack of mutual understanding between the rulers and the ruled. In A.D. 1866, Sir Sayyid made an important policy statement in which he set the acquisition of "liberty" and a "Parliament", as the goal of loyalism. He said:

> "The word *liberty* has for us all a spell which causes the heart to beat more strongly, the breast to heave more proudly...when we possess an *Indian Parliament* legislating mainly for the good of the country, filled by men whose fidelity is beyond suspicion, then shall bright days of India return or rather brighter days than ever she possessed in her best time."

The aspiration for a Parliamentary democracy in this subcontinent, however, had its limitations, especially with reference to the Muslims. For, being pitted against an overwhelming majority of the Hindus, who outnumbered them by at least three times, the Muslims would naturally be under the prospect of being kept in a state of perpetual subjugation by the majority community. This aspect was, therefore, bound to reflect sooner or later in the political thinking of the Muslims, and Sir Sayyid realised it soon afterwards on second thought regarding the nature and functions of representative Government.

In A.D. 1885, when the preparations were going on for founding the Indian National Congress, Sir Sayyid felt grave apprehension in respect of the interests of the Muslims. For, it was designed to be an all-India Organisation to respresent the social, economic and political aspirations of all the communities of the subcontinent. He rightly visualised that in a country, where the caste Hindus had gone far ahead of others in the process of westernisation, they would naturally dominate in such an association and may jeopardise the interests of the Muslims by resorting to the support of the Hindu majority. He, therefore, advised the Muslims to stand aloof from the Congress till such times when its aims and aspirations become fully known. In his *Akheri Mazamin*, Sir Sayyid writes:

> "Long before the idea of founding the Indian National Congress was mooted. I had given thought to the matter whether representative government is suited to the conditions of India. I studied John Stuart Mill's views in support of representative government...I reached the conclusion that the first requisite of a representative government is that the voters should possess the highest degree of homogeneity. In a form of government which depends for its functioning upon majorities, it is necessary that the people should have no differences in the matter of

> nationality, religion, ways of living, customs, modes, culture and historical traditions. ... Only when such, homogeneity is present can representative government work or prove beneficial. It should not be even thought of when these conditions do not exist. In a country like India where homogeneity does not exist in any one of these fields, the introduction of representative government cannot produce any beneficial fesults; it can only result in interfering with the peace and prosperity of the land."

Having studied the aims and objects of the Congress, Sir Sayyid found it unsuitable to the interests of the Muslims. In his lectures on "the present state of Indian politics" at Lucknow and Mirat in A.D. 1887-1888, he observed that the aims and objects of the Indian National Congress were "exceedingly inexpedient" for a country which was inhabited by the people of "two different nationalities (qawm)". "Now, if all the Englishmen were to leave India", he pointed out, "who would be the rulers of this country? Is it possible that under the circumstances two *qawms*, the Muslims and the Hindus, could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power? Most certainly not. One of them surely subjugate the other and thrust it down. To hope that both could remain equal is to desire the impossible and the inconceiveable".

In this context, he considered the fundamental assumption of the Congress that all peoples of Indo-Pakistan subcontinent belonged to one Indian nation as wrong and based on "ignorance of history and present day realities". For, in his opinion the Marathas, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Baniyans, Sudras, Sikhs, Bengalees, Madrasis, Peshawaris and especially the Muslims have their own separate religious, cultural, social and historical traditions, which often conflicted with one another and which could not be fused into one homogeneous tradition. He, therefore, opined that the "experiment which Indian National Congress wants to make, is fraught with dangers and sufferings for all the nationalities of India, especially for the Muslims".

The reason for this adverse conviction of Sir Sayyid had lain in his day-to-day experience. For, in spite of open-hearted goodwill and friendliness demonstrated by Sir Sayyid and Nawab Abd al-Latif towards the Hindus, almost every progressive move of the latter encroached heavily on the Muslim interests. For instance, in A.D. 1867, Hindu leaders started a language movement in Benaras with the object of so-called Indianisation of the Urdu language by replacing the Perso-Arabic script and expressions with Deva Nagri script and Sanskritic expressions. Such Indianisation of Bengali literature was carried on much earlier by the modern educated Hindus of Bengal. Sanskritisation of Bengali literature, not only cornered the Muslims of Bengal in the literary field but by their aversion to Sanskritic Bengali, it also kept them aloof from modern developments. This language movements and similar other episodes convinced Sir Sayyid that the Hindus and Muslims were destined to fall increasingly apart from each other. In the same year, he disclosed to Alexander Shakespear that although at that moment there was no open hostility between the two communities, "it will increase immensely in future" on account of the influence of the modern educated people.

From A.D. 1878 to 1883, when Sir Sayyid was a Member of Governor-General's Legislative Council he felt that some sort of safeguard was necessary for the promotion of interests of the Muslim community. In his speech on the 12th January, 1883, in the Council, he observed:

> "The system of representation by election means the representation of the views and the interests of the majority of the population; and in countries where the population is composed of one

> race and one creed, it is, no doubt, the best system that can be adopted. But, my Lord, in a country like India, where caste distinction still flourish, where there is no fusion of the various races, where religious distinctions are still violent, where education in its modern sense has not made an equal or proportionate progress among all the sections of the population, I am convinced that the introduction of the principle of election, pure and simple, for representation of various interests on the local boards and district councils, would be attended with evils of greater significance than [the benefit which might accrue from] purely economic consideration".

When Lord Ripon created local self-Government (while Sir Sayyid was a Member of the Legislative Council), Sir Sayyid successfully insisted on separate nomination for the Muslims to local councils. About A.D. 1888, when the Congressites proposed for introducing competitive examination for the recruitment of the Indo-Pakistanis into the civil service, Sir Sayyid again pressed the government for special safeguards for the Muslim interests through nomination. "In your opinion", he pointed out to the Congressites, "the peoples of India form one nation. Hence, competitive examinations may be introduced. But, have the Muslims attained to such a position as regards higher English education, as to put them on a level with the Hindus? Most certainly not".

Nevertheless, he believed to the last that the current of history brought the peoples of this subcontinent into a common forum "like a newly-wedded bride whose two beautiful and luscious eyes are the Hindus and the

Muslims". Hence, for the real prosperity of this subcontinent, both the communities should get equal opportunity and should advance with equal pace. For, the Muslims had "the same claim" to this subcontinent as the high-caste Hindus.

It is, therefore, clear that although Sir Sayyid ideally aspired for the acquisition of constitutional "liberty" and a "Parliament" for the peoples of this subcontinent, in the practical field several difficulties blocked the road. In the first place, the backwardness of the Muslims in comparison to the Hindus, prevented them from keeping pace with the latter in the field of modernism and progress. Secondly, unsympathetic, rather hostile attitude of the Hindu leaders towards Muslim culture threatened to demolish all grounds for mutual understanding and rapprochement between the two communities. Thirdly, the overwhelming Hindu majority of the population in this subcontinent offered a poor prospect to the Muslims under a Parliamentary form of Government. This was especially so because Sir Sayyid was thinking of a unitary form of government after the model Great Britain. Tossed between his ideal aspirations and practical impediments, Sir Sayyid was, put into a difficult position for solving the unique problem of working out a synthesis in Indo-Pakistani politics and carving out a future for the backward and down-trodden Muslims.

In this context, he felt deep apprehension with regard to several possibilities of the historical current. In the first place, the Muslim might meddle too much in politics (in his opinion, by joining hands with the Bengali Hindus) and in that case on account of their well-known "bravery" and "soldierly spirit" they might suffer ruthless suppression at the hands of the foreign rulers. Secondly, if the British left this country at any time, the Hindus and the Muslims might enter into a suicidal civil-war and block the way for progress and prosperity.

Thirdly, if a Parliamentary democracy was set up in this subcontinent, the Muslims might face the prospect of a perpetual subjugation by overwhelming Hindu majority. Under the then prevailing circumstances, there was little scope to think of a geographical division of this subcontinent and to bid for a separate State and a separate Parliament for the Muslims. The only thing he could do was to secure for the Muslims special safeguards through nomination in government jobs and local councils, and for the rest he placed his confidence on the capability of the younger generation. He reminded the Muslims that they were wanting in knowledge, wanting in higher education, wanting in wealth and they would help nobody if they are to dabble in politics. He advised them to concentrate their attention for acquiring modern education, especially at the higher levels. His motto was "educate, educate, educate". For, he believed that all the socio-political ills of this subcontinent "may be cured by this treatment". "Cure the root", he would often say, "and the tree will flourish".

In his report of the Select Committee for the better diffusion and advancement of learning among Muhammadans of India in A.D. 1872, he wrote about the then prevailing system of education among the Muslims as follows:

> "The times and the spirit of the age and sciences and the results of those sciences, have all been altered. The old Muhammadan books and the tone of their writings do not teach the followers of Islam independence of thought, perspicuity and simplicity, nor do they enable them to arrive at the truth of matters in general. On the contrary, they deceive and teach men to veil their meaning, to embelish their speech with fine words, to describe things wrongly and in irrelevant terms, to flatter with false praise, to live in a state of

> (intellectual) haughtiness, vanity and self-conceit, to hate other fellow creature, to have no sympathy with them, to speak with exaggeration, to leave the history of the past unascertained and to relate facts like tales and stories".
>
> "The system of education to be now adopted should be free from all faults and defects, and should tend to better the condition of the Muhammadans in this world as well as in the next world".

He, therefore, endeavoured to make available to the younger generation a modern education and dedicated his life in persuading them to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the acquisition of modern arts and sciences. For, "when you have fully acquired education", he exhorted them, "then you will know what rights you can legitimately demand of the British Government".

In this context, the foundation of the British Indian Association by Sir Sayyid and the Central Muhammadan Association by Sayyid Amir Ali, is significant. For, these association aimed at keeping the Muslim within reasonable bounds in politics by providing a common forum for the open discussion of their day to day problems on the one hand, and keeping them abreast of the political developments at home and abroad on the other. So that, the Muslims may keep in touch with politics without incurring disfavour of the British Government.

Moreover, in his attempt to prove that Islam was amenable to progress and adaptable to the changes of time and environment, Sir Sayyid had also started a vigorous campaign for research with the object of re-interpreting the history and philosophy of Islam in the light of modern knowledge. In A.D. 1870, he published a brochure entitled "Essays on the question whether Islam has been beneficial or injurious to human in British India towards the ruling power". He divided the subject into two sections which are as follows:

(i) "Whether according to the religious tenets of the *Hanafi* sect, British India is *Dar al-Islam* (*i.e.*, abode of peace) or *Dar al-Harb* (*i.e.*, abode of war)".

(ii) "Whether it is lawful or not, for the Mahomedans of British India to wage war against their rulers who professed Christian religion".

At the end of a long discussion, he concluded that since the Christian rulers did not obstruct the religious functions of the Muslims, this subcontinent continued to be *Dar al-Islam* as it was before. Hence it was not lawful for the Muslims of this subcontinent to wage *jihad* or holy war against their Christian rulers. In course of his discussion, he also tried to impress upon the audience that the British nation was an "ally" of the *Sultan-Khalifah* of Turkey, and the friendship existing between them bound the Muslims in loyalty to the British Crown. Consequently, the waging war against the British Government was not only unlawful but prohibited. Hence, what the Nawab advocated as an expedient and as an indispensable need of the time, the Mawlana justified it on religious grounds.

However, delusive the arguments had been, it served the purpose of a legal fiction. It was extremely helpful; for it served not only as an instrument for minimising the opposition among the mass of the people against the rulers but it also gave to the modernists a sacred weapon to appease their opponents. Even Sir Sayyid took full advantage of this *fatwa* as is obvious from his letter to *Pioneer*, dated the 4th April, 1871, on the question of *jihad*.

CHAPTER V

PARTITION OF BENGAL AND FOUNDATION OF MUSLIM LEAGUE (1905—)

At the turn of the present century, the loyalism of the Muslims and the consequent reliance on the British Government held out a gloomy prospect. For, although Hunter's analysis of the woes and sufferings of the Muslims under the British rule (in his *Our Indian Musalmans*, published in 1871) and the pleadings of Sir Sayyid and Nawab Abd al-Latif had succeeded in drawing the sympathy of a section of English officers, yet loyalism did not bring any concrete result. The extent of hope and despair entertained by the Muslims at the time can be gleaned from a series of articles published by Rafiuddin Ahmad in the *Nineteenth Century* (a journal published from New York) from 1891 to 1898. In these articles, the author calls upon his co-religionists to remain loyal to the British Government and lauds the British Crown as the ruler of the greatest number of Muslims in the world. He then fervently appeals to the British Government to be sympathetic and benevolent towards the Muslims and to come to their help in improving their social conditions; but apparently all in vain. Amidst the gloom and despair, the partition of Bengal in A.D. 1905, brought the promise of a worthwhile future, especially to the Muslims of Bengal.

Although from the administrative point of view this partition was a provincial affair, it stirred great feelings among the Muslims as well as among the Hindus and had far-reaching effect on the political course of the whole subcontinent. In order to have an insight into the political thought of the Muslims, it is, therefore, necessary to examine the implications of the partition of Bengal and related events.

According to the declared policy of the Government, the partition of Bengal and the formation of Eastern Bengal and Assam into a separate province was effected mainly for administrative reasons. In the first place, the area under undivided Bengal was too large and unwieldy a unit to be efficiently administered by one Lieutenant-Governor from Calcutta. Secondly, the domination of the capitalists of Calcutta on the agrarian economy of Eastern Bengal and Assam had stifled local initiative and progress, and produced a chronic state of poverty among the teeming millions of inhabitants residing in these under-developed areas. For, the drainage of rich agricultural wealth of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Calcutta, did not pay a reasonable return to the primary producers. The partition of Bengal was, therefore, calculated to restore better efficiency in the Government administration on the one hand, and encourage local initiative for progress and industrialisation on the other.

The formation of Eastern Bengal and Assam into a Lieutenant-Governor's province with headquarters at Dacca, brought to the Muslim population the promise of social and economic emancipation. In the first place, the city of Dacca, which was the site of decaying Muslim civilisation, was still under dominant Muslim influence where the Muslims had a greater chance of success than in Calcutta. Secondly, in the new province the Muslim population greatly outnumbered all other communities. Thirdly, it relieved them considerably from competing with the more advanced Hindus of Calcutta. The partition was, therefore, hailed by the Muslims who acclaimed it as the fruit of loyalism.

On the other hand, the partition conveyed a threat to the interests of the wealthy and educated Hindus of Bengal, who had, thus far, held a privileged position in the socio-economic life of Bengal and Assam. They interpreted this measure as inspired by the British policy of *divide et empera* and raised a hue and cry for the annulment of the partition. They made it an all-India issue and launched an intense agitation generally known as the *Swadeshi* movement for the re-unification of Bengal.

The English statesmen and the Press were so much impressed by this agitation that whisper for appeasing the Hindus by immediately cancelling the partition of Bengal, became louder and louder in England and the vehemence of Hindu protest in the Congress against partition "convinced the educated Muslims that they could be redeemed only if they created their own political force and their own leadership."

On the 1st October, 1906, the leading Muslims of this subcontinent presented a deputation (led by the late Aga Khan) to Lord Minto at the Viceregal Lodge in Simla, and urged him to safeguard the Muslim interest against any political concession that might be "hastily made" to the Hindus with special reference to Bengal. The Viceroy replied that the Muslim community "may rest assured that their political rights and interests as a community will be safeguarded in any administrative reorganisation" and that they may rely upon the British *Raj* to respect the religious beliefs and "the national traditions of the myriads composing the population of His Majesty's Indian Empire."

Foundation of the Muslim League and Separate Electorate

In their zeal for loyalism, the Muslims would have probably relied upon the British *Raj* especially after this assurance of the Viceroy. But other socio-political cross-currents in the country pointed to the supreme need of founding a political party of their own. In December, 1906, a convention of Muslim leaders of this subcontinent was called at Dacca by Nawab Salimullah and on the 30th December, the all-India Muslim League was formed with the following main objectives:

(a) To promote the feeling of loyalty to the British Government.

(b) To protect and advance the political rights of the Muslims of this subcontinent and to represent their needs and aspirations to the Government.

(c) To prevent the rise of any hostility among the Muslims towards other communities.

Another big step was taken towards creating an effective "political force" of the Muslims when the League demanded separate electorate for the Muslims in order to safeguard their interests in the provincial and Central legislatures. Sayyid Amir Ali pressed upon Lord Morley and convinced him of the genuineness of Muslim fears of being duped by hostile and rapidly growing Hindu nationalism. The award of separate electorate for the Muslims was granted in A.D. 1909.

In A.D. 1887, Sir Sayyid expressed his deep concern about the introduction of parliamentary democracy in this country. In the context of such a possibility he examined the position of the Muslims in contrast to the majority Hindu community, and considered four alternative modes of election which could be adopted. In the first place, if the joint-electorate was adopted, the ratio of the Muslim representatives would be at best one for four Hindus. Secondly, if the voters were selected on the basis of a minimum property, the Muslims being generally poor, would be almost entirely ousted from the field. Thirdly, he felt that reservation of seats for the Muslims would not lead to satisfactory results. Fourthly, separate electorate with equal number of seats with the Hindus, might solve the problem; but even in that case, Sir Sayyid felt that it would be difficult to find an adequate number of able Muslims to take active part in politics because of the general backwardness of the Muslim community. He, therefore, paused and called upon the Muslims to equip themselves with modern knowledge in order to be able to brave the new future.

At the opening of the twentieth century, the political situation had undergone a substantial change. In the first place, the Indian National Congress (among whose 756 executive members only 17 were Muslims in A.D. 1906) had grown into a full-fledged political party and was giving an impression at home and abroad that it represented the views of all communities of this subcontinent. Secondly, a liberal and humanitarian outlook was also gaining ground at the British Parliament in respect of its policy towards the Indian empire which encouraged the introduction of self-governing institutions in this country. Thirdly, the Aligarh College had produced a good number of graduates able to take the case of the Muslims in their own hands. Under this changed circumstances, the policy of unconditional reliance on the British Government was no longer deemed promising of an equitable dividend. The foundation of the Muslim League and the demand for separate electorate were thus the result of an emergent feeling of the Muslim leaders that they must go a step further than Sir Sayyid did and pay increasing attention to the political interests of the Muslims.

This feeling of the necessity of creating a separate political platform for the Muslims was also stimulated by the growth of an aggressive Hindu nationalism which was beginning to overpower the liberal policies infused earlier into the Congress by Dadabhai Noroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The Hindu nationalists were bringing forth idolatrous concepts mixed up with political ideology, and were out to discredit the Muslims by calling them foreigners and enemies of Hinduism.

In Bengal, Bankim Chandra Chaterji had infused "mother cult" during the last quarter of the nineteenth century which he developed in his *Anandamath* (or the abbey of bliss), which depicts the then stipendiary Nawab of Murshidabad as representing the Muslim power in Bengal and as the cause of the destruction of Hindu religion. It, therefore, enthuses the Hindus to distinguish between their enemies and friends and to drive away the "tipsy long beards" *i.e.*, the Muslims, from this country under the providential rule and patronage of the British Government. It identifies "motherland" with the "mother goddess" who was the source of life and prosperity and hence the supreme object of worship. Bankim Chandra's ideas about the mother cult were crystallised in an ode to the much worshipped Hindu goddesses Durga and Lakshmi (in the same work), entitled "Bande Mataram" which in Sanskrit means, "Mother! I bow to thee!" (adopted recently as a national anthem of India). *Anandamath* being an inspiring novel, written by a master-hand, at once captured the imagination of the Hindus throughout this subcontinent and produced an immense political enthusiasm with a strong religious and communal bias bent upon spitting hatred towards Muslim neighbours, often rebuking them as *Javana* (*i.e.*, hated Greeks) and Nyarhe (*i.e.*, the shaven-heads or circumcised).

In North India, the Urdu-Hindi controversy had created a similar communal tension. In A.D. 1900, while and anti-Urdu drive from Beneras was, afoot, the Muslim leaders of Aligarh felt the necessity of launching a campaign for popularising Urdu among the Muslims. Accordingly a programme was chalked out for the purpose and it was decided that the campaign would be inaugurated by the then leader of the Aligarh movement, Muhsin al-Mulk Nawab Mahdi Ali Khan, with a series of lectures at Lucknow. But when the permission of the Government was sought, Sir Anthony Macdonald, the Lt.-Governor of U.P., disapproved of the campaign and it was said that on the insistence of the Muslim leaders for permission, the Lt.-Governor assumed a threatening aspect and addressed Muhsin al-Mulk in his official correspondence in a humiliating manner by dropping his titles "Muhsin al-Mulk Nawab Bahadur". Although this insult was borne by the Muslim leaders with patience in the interest of loyalism, it indicated that in the face of the zeal of English officials to appease the Hindu nationalists, reliance on the British *Raj* was not enough to safeguard their cultural and political interests.

The growing hostilities shown by Hindu revivalist movements such as *Arya Samaj* and *Sivaji cult*, led by Dayananda Sarswati and Bal Gangadhar Tilak respectively, had also alarmed the Muslims. The anti-cow-killing campaign sponsored by these two leaders resulted in a number of communal riots between the two major communities from A.D. 1893 onwards.

On the 30th December, 1911, Wiqar al-Mulk (the then leader of the Aligarh movement) wrote, "if we join the National Congress, our existence would be lost in the same way as the river loses itself in the sea". A few years later Mawlana Muhammad Ali stated that "the spectacle of a go-ahead Hinduism, dreaming of self-Government and playing with its ancient gods, clad in the vesture of democracy, dazed the conservative Muslim, who was shaking himself free from the paralysing grip of the past". The Muslim found all of a sudden that the spirit of the fight as well as its weapons were changed and he "felt as if he was being treated as an alien, as a meddlesome freak, who had wantonly interfered with the course of Indian history". Mawlana Muhammad Ali accused the Hindu patriots who raised the slogan of *Swaraj* (*i.e.*, self-Government) in the name of Indian nationalism, to have refused to give quarters to the Muslims unless the latter quietly shuffled off their individuality and became completely Hinduised. He justified the demand for "separate electorate" in this context as "the imperative duty for self-preservation" against the onslaught of militant Hindu nationalism.

Likewise, Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah (speaking in A.D. 1916, while he was regarded as an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity) pleaded that the demand for separate electorate was "not a matter of policy but a matter of necessity to the Muslims", who required "to be roused from the coma and torpor" into which they had fallen for long.

Thus, the foundation of the Muslim League and the award of separate electorate, gave the Muslims a basic sense of security and the satisfaction that, at least, in the Muslim majority provinces they would be able to hold their own. It also indicated the important fact that the Muslims of this subcontinent had once again begun to recreate their own political future. In this, the all-India Muslim League provided them with a common forum and the separate electorate, a strong buttress, which eventually proved to be the stepping-stones to the achievement of Pakistan National State.

About the time of the partition of Bengal, the force of aggressive Hindu nationalism in Bengal, inspired by Bankim Chandra had attained full stature and with the spread of Congress sponsored agitation against the partition of Bengal among the Hindus of other provinces, the anti-Muslim feeling also spread, especially through the medium of the song *Bande Mataram*, which became henceforth "the *Marseillaise* of the Hindu nationalist movement". The extremists who became preponderant in the Congress urged that "radical measures" be taken to coerce the government to annul partition. At the 1907 session of Congress at Surat, the extremists even made an abortive attempt to gain control over its policies, and amidst their violent criticism against the British and the moderate Congress leaders, one of them took off a shoe and flung it at Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. In April, 1908, the extremists were, expelled from the Congress and it was declared that the aim of the Indian National Congress was henceforth to be "independence and self-government for India" within the secure pattern of the British empire.

Nevertheless, the agitation against the partition of Bengal continued with all its fury and the desire to appease the insurgent Hindu nationalism by the annulment of partition became more and more distinct in the British Press. At last, in A.D. 1911, King George V, proclaimed the revision of the partition of Bengal along with his announcement of the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi, at the close of his Delhi Darbar in utter disregard to the feelings of the Muslims.

The triumph of the Hindu-controlled Congress, naturally delivered a shock to the Muslims and struck them with the apprehension that the British would no longer be able or willing to protect them against the superior forces of Hindu nationalism. Hence the policy of unstinted loyalism could no longer be maintained. In the next session of the all-India Muslim League which was held in December 1912, the Muslim leaders proposed to amend the constitution of the League with a view to ally itself with the Congress in a common demand for *Swaraj* and in A.D. 1913, Wiqar al-Mulk Nawab Mushtaq Husayn (who succeeded Muhsin al-Mulk to the leadership of the Aligarh movement) firmly declared that the Muslims would no longer attach themselves to the narrow limits of loyalism but would henceforth put their "reliance on the strength of their own arms" and the policy of the Muslim League was changed from loyalism to home-rule by adopting a resolution which stated that the ideal of the Muslim League would henceforth be to strive for self-government within the British empire, which would be achieved only by means of harmonious working and co-operation of the two major communities.

This change of policy brought the League at par with the Congress and received warm appreciation from the latter. It was on this basis that Mawlana Muhammad Ali succeeded in persuading Muhammad Ali Jinnah (the then prominent member of the Congress and the ambassador of unity) to join the League at London with an assurance that his membership in the League would not imply disloyalty to the larger (all-Indian) national cause to which his life was dedicated.

At this stage, as the Muslim leaders were amazed by the growing pace of Hindu nationalism, so also the Hindu leaders realized that it was almost impossible to persuade the British Government to introduce constitutional reforms in this country without presenting a united demand of both the major communities. The case for Hindu-Muslim unity was, therefore, taken up in right earnest, especially by the pleadings of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and from 1915 to 1920, the League and the Congress held their annual sessions at the same place and about the same time.

The immediate result of these endeavours was the Lucknow Pact of 1916, in which a united demand was evolved by the League and the Congress. The Pact recognised the League's demand for separate electorate and on the appeal of Mr. Jinnah, the Congress also agreed to guarantee a portion of seats in excess in the future Legislative Council to the Muslims in certain provinces where they formed a minority. The Pact demanded on the British Government for introducing elected majorities in Councils with extended powers and recommended that the Viceroy should select one half of his Executive Councillors from amongst Indo-Pakistanis.

The strength of this demand was based on a pledge of the Congress, League and of the Rulers of Native States to help the British Government in the Great War of 1914-1918, and the fact that 70,000 Indian troops embarked to serve overseas within a month of the declaration of War lent further support to it. No wonder, therefore, that the British Government issued a declaration revising its previous attitude in 1817 (known as Montagu Declaration) to the effect that the aim of British rule in India was "the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". It also promised "substantial steps in that direction as soon as possible".

About this time, the normal course of Muslim politics was interrupted by a wave of pan-Islamism, which was gathering momentum in Bengal and elsewhere in this subcontinent, for over half a century. Under the pressure of socio-political circumstances of the Muslims abroad, it burst forth in the form of *Khilafat* movement and for more than a decade overwhelmed political currents at home.

CHAPTER VI

KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

From the earliest time, the Muslim rulers of Bengal and Delhi were in the habit of paying nominal allegiance to the Abbasid *Khalifahs* of Baghdad and Cairo and received titles of recognition and investiture from them. This practice continued until the rise of Mughal power in this subcontinent. For, although the descendants of Chengis Khan had become devout Muslims, they scarcely reconciled themselves with the institution of *Khilafat*. On the other hand, the seizure of the last Abbasid *Khalifah* of Cairo by the Turkish Sultan Selim II in A.D. 1517 and his later assumption of the title "Khalifah", was not looked with favour by the Muslims of this subcontinent. Hence, so long as there was a Mughal emperor at Delhi, the Indo-Pak Muslims took no cognisance of the Turkish *Sultan-Khalifah*.

But with the removal of the last Mughal emperor from the throne of Delhi following the great revolt of 1857-58, fresh interest in the institution of *Khilafat* began to stir among the Muslims of Bengal. As we have seen earlier, Nawab Abd al-Latif pleaded for loyalty to the British Government on the basis of friendship between the Turkish *Sultan-Khalifah* and the British Crown. We have also seen that this trend was opposed by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan. Probably he did not regard the diplomatic friendship of the two sovereigns as a sound edifice for the attachment of a religious sentiment or else he may have feared that an extra-territorial attachment to the Turkish *Sultan-Khalifah* might interfere with national aspirations at home.

Nevertheless, many of his colleagues and contemporaries were deeply affected by Pan-Islamic ideas propagated by Jamal al-Din Afghani. The appeals of

Sultan Abd al-Hamid II (A.D. 1876-1909), to the Muslims for lending support to his policies had also stirred the religious sentiment of the Indo-Pak Muslims. In A.D. 1892, Shibli Numani (the great scholar in Arabic and Persian) and Rafiuddin Ahmad (an accomplished Aligarian gentleman), visited Turkey, met the Sultan and returned home as inspired Pan-Islamists. A number of articles contributed by Rafiuddin Ahmad, Ghulam-us-Saqalain and Sayyid Amir Ali in the *Contemporary Review* and *Nineteenth Century* (two prominent journals published from London and New York) from A.D. 1891 to 1915, show that the Muslims of this subcontinent were out even to create a world public opinion in favour of the preservation and integrity of the Turkish empire or the "Caliphate". Their active interest in Turkish affairs is further illustrated by the pompous celebration of the Muslims of Bombay, the Turkish victory over the Greeks in A.D. 1897, in spite of the British sympathies to the contrary. From A.D. 1910 onwards, the European onslaught upon the Turkish empire, the Italian occupation of Tripoli, the Balkan Wars and the events leading to the World War I, as Dr. I. H. Qureshi points out, "created grave misgivings in the minds of the Indian Muslims" regarding the political future of Islam in the world.

At this juncture Mawlana Muhammad Ali emerged as a great leader who was to dominate the scene of Muslim politics in this subcontinent till his death in A.D. 1930. In A.D. 1912, he formed the Red Crescent Mission to help the Turkish victims of the Balkan Wars, to which Wiqar al-Mulk, the then leader of the Aligarh movement, donated the entire fund of the Aligarh College. It has been noted above that at the outbreak of the World War I, the Muslims pledged their wholehearted support to the British Government. Apprehending that the Turks might join hands with the Germans in the hope of recovering the territories they lost to Great Britain, especially Egypt, Mawlana Muhammad

Ali wrote an article in the Comrade (a newspaper edited and published by him) entitled "the Choice of the Turks", in which he begged the British Government to win over the Truks by making good the losses which had been inflicted upon the Ottoman empire despite its traditional friendship with Great Britain. Unfortunately for the Indo-Pak Muslims, Sultan Abdal-Hamid joined the Germans and declared *jihad* or holy war against the allies of the British. The British realised that "war between Britain and Turkey placed a great strain upon the loyalty" of the Indo-Pak Muslims and being suspicious of their leaders, jailed Mawlana Muhammad Ali, Mawlana Shawkat Ali and Abul Kalam Azad in 1915 (who were released in 1919). But to allay fears of the Muslims, Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, stated in the Parliament that it was not the intention of the British Government to deprive the Turks of their homelands. When, despite this assurance, territories inhabited by the Turks, such as parts of Anatolia, were wrested from Turkey in 1920, the Muslims naturally received a great shock. No wonder, therefore, that soon after his release, Mawlana Muhammad Ali found himself at the head of a popular agitation for the preservation of *Khilafat*.

It is difficult to reduce the objectives of the *Khilafat* movement into a well-defined formula. The first *Khilafat* conference was held in London about March, 1920. Mawlana Muhammad Ali, who was a deligate to this conference, stated in a manifesto as follows:

> "No effort will be spared to conciliate Europeans and Americans, and to convince them of the genuineness of our deepest concern for the Caliphate, the Jazirat-ul-Arab, the Holy Places and the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and of the extreme reasonableness of our demands in relation to these and of the support of the solid mass of entire Islam at our back".

Following the conference, Mawlana Muhammad Ali went on a tour of Europe, at the end of which he was convinced that seeking aid of the European nations was useless. This disillusionment led him to embark on the policy of seeking independence of this subcontinent in co-operation with the Hindus and thereby to create an effective international political force of the Muslims. On his return from England, he spoke at Bombay (in October, 1920), in which he sought the co-operation of the Hindus in the *Khilafat* movement and for the independence of Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, and he pleaded that the achievement of the objectives of the *Khilafat* movement depended largely on the Independence of this country.

Thus, although the Khilafatists ideally aspired for the protection and preservation of the Turkish empire and the holy places of the Muslims in Arabia, they resolved to try their real strength on the altar of the freedom movement for this subcontinent, because the logic of the circumstances set before them "the independence of this country" as a prerequisite for the achievement of their Khilafatist ideals. Moreover, the Congress, as well as the Muslim League, had fully realised the necessity of mutual co-operation for making their demands effective. The Khilafatists, thus, sought the help of the Hindus.

The Congress responded to the appeal of the *Khilafat* leaders favourably and the all-India Congress committee which met at Benares in 1920, resolved to extend their co-operation to the *Khilafat* movement. The leading members of the Congress and *Khilafat* movement met at Amritsar, discussed the political situation created by the betrayal of Lloyd George and resolved to organise a country-wide agitation for *Khilafat* under the guidance of Mr. Gandhi. Shortly after, a meeting of the *Khilafat* committee endorsed the above resolution by accepting the leadership of

Mr. Gandhi and asked the Viceroy of India either to lead the *Khilafat* movement or to resign. Otherwise they held out the threat of launching a country-wide non-violence non-co-operation movement from the 1st of August, 1921.

In 1921, about the schedule time, the inevitable agitation was launched. In a conference at Karachi, Mawlana Muhammad Ali firmly declared, "it was unlawful (*haram*) for true Muslims to serve the enemies of Islam" *i.e.*, the British Government. As a result, he was arrested on the 14th September and imprisoned for two years. On the 13th October, 1921, the Muslim students came out of the schools and colleges and joined the agitation. The slogan "Islam in danger" stirred the deepest religious sentiment of the Muslims and encouraged further by the co-operation of the Hindus, the Muslims of this subcontinent were thoroughly roused.

In 1923, the *Khilafat* Committee, Indian National Congress and the *Swaraj* Committee jointly resolved to launch civil disobedience in the event of Britain's joining any war in future against Turkey. From 1920 to 1926, the *Khilafat* movement led by Mawlana Muhammad Ali and the non-violence non-co-operation movement led by Mr. Gandhi tended to bring the Muslims and Hindus closer together in their struggle for freedom. Amidst growing enthusiasm for mutual friendship, the Hindu detestation for the slogan "Allah-u-Akbar" (a Quranic phrase meaning "God is great") and the Muslim detestation for "Bande Mataram" (because of its polytheistic implication), sank into the background. The echo and re-echo of both the slogans, raised by the joint processions, filled the air in every nook and corner of the subcontinent. It is said that about 80,000 people were put behind the bars during the agitation. When Mawlana Muhammad Ali came out of the jail in August, 1923, he emphasised on two immediate objectives of the *Khilafat* movement, *viz.*, (i) promotion of the non-violence non-co-operation and (ii) Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1926, the Muslim League even went to the extent of passing a resolution for the protection of cows. For the time being, Hindu-Muslim unity appeared to be almost accomplished.

For rousing national consciousness, Mawlana Muhammad Ali and Mr. Gandhi had, however, appealed to the religious sentiment of their co-religionists, which eventually proved to be the stumbling block. For, so long as the Muslims stuck to the Islamic ideal of strict monotheism and the Hindus to polytheism and idolatry, there was hardly any scope for evolving a principle of mutual tolerance. Mutual understanding between them was possible only on the basis of secular interests and in so far as they remained indifferent to each other's religious beliefs and practices. No wonder, therefore, that *Khilafat* and non-violence non-co-operation movements were also attended with scattered communal riots in spite of continuous appeal by the leaders for unity and tolerance. In 1924, the frequency of violent occurrences convicted Mr. Gandhi that the movement was getting out of hands. He, therefore, called off the agitation to the utter disadvantage of the Muslims. Sometimes earlier Mawlana Muhammad Ali and many other Muslim leaders were imprisoned for passing a resolution in a meeting asking the Indian troops not to serve the British. The calling off of the agitation by Mr. Gandhi, gave a further chance to the British Government to take advantage of the Indian weaknesses. They arrested Mr. Gandhi and many others and imprisoned them for different terms. As a result the non-co-operation movement stopped forthwith and the leaderless and emasculated *Khilafat* movement dwindled for a while until Kamal Ataturk finally abolished *Khilafat*. Thereafter all agitation came to an end.

In 1923, Sir Abbas Ali Baig pointed out (*Asiatic Review*, Vol. XIX, October, 1923, pp. 577-86) that the main ideals of the *Khilafat* movement were (i) safeguarding of the position of the *Khalifah*, especially as regards his wardenship of the Holy Places of Islam, and (ii) bringing about a just and equitable peace between the Allied Powers and Turkey. These points were discussed in the *Khilafat* conference held at Makkah on the 7th June, 1926. But in 1931, when the "All-Muslim Conference of Asia and Africa for *Khilafat*" was held at Jerusalem (*Contemporary Review*, London, Vol. XII, March, 1932, pp. 343-51), the British Government was able to exert so much influence that the topic on the restoration of *Khilafat* was dropped from the agenda. In the words of R. L. Baker (*current History Magazine*, *New York Times*, Vol. 38, July, 1933), "the explanation of its failure lies in the fundamental anachronism of a universal religion in a nationalistic world."

In the perspective of the politics at home, *Khilafat* movement was not, however, without significance. For, as the national consciousness of the Hindus was stimulated earlier by the mother cult of Bankim Chandra, and the Hindus found a cause and a rallying ground for mass-agitation in the partition of Bengal, so also the slogan "Islam in danger" stimulated mass-awakening among the Muslims. Moreover, as the political consciousness of the Hindus was sufficiently advanced about 1905 for such mass-agitation, so also the Muslims especially those of Bengal, U. P., and the Punjab were ready for political agitation about 1920. The *Khilafat* movement, thus, served the important purpose of the mass-awakening of the Muslims. Besides, the progress of the *Khilafat* and non-co-operation movements, and the failure of the joint venture also demonstrated the points of strength and weakness of the Muslims *vis-a-vis* the Hindus and the British Government. In spite of the failure, the amaging sense of unity which it developed among the Muslims gave them a tremendous self-confidence, and it was felt that unlike in the revolt of 1857-58 and the *Khilafat* movement, some ways must be found out to go ahead, if necessary, without alliance with the Hindus in order to attain success. Thus, although the *Khilafat* movement was in a sense, a political romanticism, yet it was a grand experiment in national politics and the gain accrued by means of trial and error thereof was tangibly substantial.

In its international aspect, the *Khilafat* movement had focussed the gaze of the Muslim world to the need of unifying the smaller Muslim countries into a federation or a confederating power, which eventually gave birth to pan-Arabism in Arabic speaking lands and pan-Turanism in Turkey. Likewise, the Muslims of this subcontinent indulged in a somewhat wishful thinking of unifying Iran, Afghanistan, and the north-western India (where the Muslims were in majority) into a federation, and out of this anachronism, the concept of "Pakistan" was born.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONCEPT OF PAKISTAN

Etymologically, the term "Pakistan" means a pure or holy land. But Choudhury Rahmat Ali, the first enunciator of the term captioned it as symbolic of—P to represent Punjab, A Afghania (North-West Frontier Province), K Kashmir, I Iran, S Sind (including Kutch and Kathiawar), TAN Tukheristan, Afghanistan and Balochistan. "It means", he says, "the land of the Paks—the spiritually pure and clean. It symbolises the religious beliefs and ethnical stocks of our people; and it stands for all the territorial constituents of our original Fatherland." Although in Rahmat Ali's opinion, it was composed of "letters taken from the names of all of our homelands—Indian and Asian", later on the non-Indian territories were excluded from its connotation. As such, it conveyed the idea of establishing a separate State in the North-Western India where the Muslims were in majority. Although Rahmat Ali may have broached the idea earlier in Great Britain, his first manifesto, namely, *Sovereign Nations in Homeland or Sub-Nations in Hindoolands*, was issued in 1933.

It is not clear from the materials at our disposal as to what actual connection he had with current politics of this subcontinent. He was an Indo-Pakistani student in Great Britain and died there in 1948. A perusal of his work, mentioned above, gives an impression that on the one hand, he realised the futility of campaigning for the unification of all Muslim countries and on the other, the march of Hindu nationalism or Aryanism conveyed to him a serious threat to the existence of the Muslims and their culture in this country. The acute self-preservative spirit thus roused in his mind, impelled him to bid for a homeland for the Muslims in North-Western India.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal had also pleaded earlier in his presidential address in the Annual Meeting of the all-India Muslim League at Ilahabad (on the 29th December, 1930) for a separate State for the Muslims in the North-Western India, to be comprised of the Panjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Balochistan. According to the Press reports (*Literary Digest*, New York, Vol. 108, Feb. 1931, p. 14 ff.) the proposal was "acclaimed by assemblages of Muslims" in different parts of the country. There was also bitter reaction against this separatist tendency, especially among the Hindus.

The original Scheme of Iqbal and Rahmat Ali, however, did not include Bengal, apparently on account of the geographical separation. About A.D. 1934, there were murmurs to create a similar Muslim State in Bengal to be called *Bang-i-Islam* and another in Hyderabad, Deccan, under the name *Usmanistan*.

All these were, at any rate, mere speculations provoked by the growing aggressiveness of Hindu nationalism. Special mention may be made of *Sangatan* and *Shuddhi* movements launched by the *Arya Samaj*. The former sought to organise the Hindus into a militant group "capable of defending themselves" against the Muslims. The *Rashtriya Svayam Sevak Sangha*, which came to the forefront in the pre-partition days, was a secret branch of this organisation, established in 1926. The latter, *i.e.*, *Suddhi* (or purification) movement, aimed at mass conversion of the Muslims into Hinduism. In 1926 the Malkan Muslims of Maharastra (who had retained many Hindu customs and ceremonies), were converted to Hinduism (*Cf. Current History Magazine*, *New York Times*, Vol. 24, 1926, pp. 78-82. Naturally, the Muslims felt deep apprehension in respect of their future in this country. Nevertheless, the practical politicians, specially the

Hindu and Muslim liberals, were still engaged in exploring possibilities of finding out an equitable solution of the communal tangle, in a federal type of Government.

Prospect for Federalism

The aversion of Sir Sayyid towards collaboration with the National Congress was mainly due to his apprehension that in a Unitary type of Government (after the model of Great Britain) the chances for the progress of the Muslims would be too bleak. In spite of his great love for parliamentary democracy, he, therefore, advised the Muslims to stand aloof from Hindu dominated Congress and to devote themselves to modern education. The foundation of loyalism was laid on the desire for this self-preparation.

But after the policy of loyalism was given up and political events during the *Khilafat* movement brought the Hindus and Muslims closer together, utmost thought was given to find out a permanent solution for the Hindu-Muslim problems. It appears that the prospect of a Federal type of Government with Provincial Autonomy suggested itself as the only way for adjusting the socio-political position of the Muslims to parliamentary democracy, which Sir Sayyid could not find in a Unitary type of Government.

In 1922, the Indian National Congress appointed a Committee (in which such liberals as Dr. Ansari and Lala Rajpat Rai were prominent members) to draw up a National Pact. But when this Committee submitted its report to the Congress next year at the Coconada Session, it was referred to another Committee and was never considered any more. About the same time, the great Bengali leader C. R. Das evolved a comprehensive formula for Hindu-Muslim unity, which was also submitted to the Coconada Session of the Congress. It was rejected by the Hindu leaders on the plea that it was partial to the Muslims. In 1926, Mr. Jinnah expressed his preparedness (in a Memorandum sent to Mr. Gandhi), to accept mixed electorate subject to certain conditions. Mr. Gandhi and the all-India Congress accepted the formula unanimously but it was not proceeded with because of the opposition of the Hindu Mahasabha leader Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya. Moreover, in 1926, when the Muslim leaders proposed in the Central Assembly debate for granting reforms to the Muslim majority province of the North-West Frontier, it was bluntly opposed by the Hindu leaders including Pandit Moti Lal Nehru. The prospect of a settlement on the federal basis was, therefore, bleak.

In A.D. 1928, His Majesty's Government appointed a Statutory Commission under Sir John Simon to review the Indian Constitution and to suggest appropriate measures for further extension of reforms. Being dissatisfied with the terms and conditions, the Indian parties decided to boycot the Commission. In the same year Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, being disgusted with the opposition of the Indian political parties, challenged them to produce a Constitution of their own instead of indulging in destructive criticism. This led to an all-parties Convention at Bombay in the same year, which appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru to frame a Draft Constitution suitable to all the communities. In the deliberations of the Convention, the Muslim leaders were hardput; because the Hindu delegates taking full advantage of their majority, gave persistent opposition to the demands of the Muslim League including that of "separate electorate". The Muslim leaders felt grave apprehension and on the 1st January, 1929, held an all-India Muslim Conference to consider the deliberations of the Convention. Thereafter, the Muslim League formulated a series of amendments demanding a Federal type of Government. *Inter alia* it was demanded that a minimum one-third of the elected representatives in both the Houses of the Central Legislature should be Muslims and that, the "residuary powers" for legislation should be vested in the Provinces. Obviously the object of these demands was to ensure full autonomy for the Muslim majority Provinces in the face of overwhelming Hindu majority at the Centre. These amendments were sent to the Nehru Committee.

When the report of the Nehru Committee was published in August, 1929 and placed before a "Unity Conference" at Lucknow, it was found that all the amendments of the all-India Muslim Conference were ignored; instead, the principle that "wherever such reservation has to be made for the Muslim minority, it must be in strict proportion to its population," was adopted. The report, therefore, gave a shock to the Muslim leaders. Mawlana Muhammad Ali argued that if this was given effect to, it will result in Hindu domination. Muhammad Ali Jinnah considered that it would oust the Muslims from any fair part in India's political future.

Speaking on the 28th December, 1929, to another all-parties Conference held at Calcutta. Mr. Jinnah emphasised, "I am exceedingly sorry that the report of the Committee is neither helpful nor fruitful in anyway whatsoever." "I think," he continued, "it will be recognised that it is absolutely essential to our progress that a Hindu-Muslim settlement should be reached and that all communities should live in a friendly and harmonious spirit in this vast country". He then repeated the demands of the all-Muslim Conference which were bluntly rejected by the Hindu leaders. He was bullied and someone even raised the objection that Mr. Jinnah had no right to speak on behalf of the Muslims; and that he did not represent them. Next morning, Mr. Jinnah said to a friend with tears in his eyes, "this is parting of the way", and in remorse and disgust, he went to England and decided to settle there.

The Congress, however. went ahead with the Nehru Report and demanded on the British Government to accept it in entirety before the 31st December, 1929. As the acceptance did not come, the Congress modified its demand from Dominion Status to complete independence at its Lahore Session on the 31st December, and decided to launch civil disobedience. Mr. Gandhi, who led the civil disobedience, brushed aside the question of Hindu-Muslim settlement as not being important at that moment. On the 24th April, 1930, Mawlana Muhammad Ali advised the Muslims to stand aloof from the agitation. He said, "we refuse to join Mr. Gandhi, because his movement is not a movement for the complete independence of India but for making the 70 millions of Indian Muslims dependents of the Hindu Mahasabha (*cf. Times of India*, Bombay, April 24, 1930). The civil disobedience movement, however. failed to attract popular support.

In the meantime, the Simon Commission submitted its report and the British Government decided to call a Round Table Conference in London, of all-Indian political parties and the Native States to delibrate on the problems of constitutional reforms in collaboration with the British Government and to devise a Constitution acceptable to all. The first session of the Round Table Conference sat from the 12th November, 1930 to 19th January, 1931, and was attended by all parties except the Congress. The second session of the Conference, from the 7th September. 1931 to the 1st December, 1931, was attended by the Congress also: but the Conference did not succeed to devise a draft acceptable to all. The outcome of the third and the final session, which sat in November-December, 1932, was not satisfactory either; it ended in mutual suspicion among the Indian parties and their common contempt for the British Raj.

Nevertheless, the prolonged discussion in the three sessions and the arguments and counter-arguments advanced by different parties, had amply demonstrated the real nature of the problem. The British Prime Minister had already warned the delegates that if they failed to arrive at a settlement acceptable to all parties, His Majesty's Government "would be compelled to apply a provisional scheme, for, they are determined that even this disability shall not be permitted to be a bar to progress". As the problem of adjusting privileges between the majority and minority communities and that of providing constitutional safeguards to the latter proved to be stumbling blocks, the Prime Minister gave a "Communal Award" providing for communal representation to allay the fear of the minorities, especially of the Muslims. This was incorporated later on in the Government of India Act of 1935.

The Act of 1935 provided, in the first place, with Provincial Autonomy and Responsible Government for the Provinces. Secondly, it envisaged a federal structure for the Central Government with the participation of the Provinces and the Native States, which was, however, never given effect to due to unfavourable circumstances. Thirdly, it promised Dominion Status as the ultimate goal. Thus, practically, it remained confined to Provincial Autonomy.

The type of Provincial Autonomy provided by it, was, at any rate, a big step towards self-Government; for, the Responsible Government was established over almost "entire field of subjects ordinarily falling to a Province in a Federation". Moreover, the Provinces were given freedom from the administrative control of the Centre with the exception of a few specific subjects of common interest.

The Act created two new Provinces, Orissa and Sind. The separation of Sind from Bombay gave the Muslim population a solid majority, which they had eagerly looked for. It provided for separate Electorate for the Muslims and statutory safeguards for minority rights. Besides, it provided for weightage to Muslims in Hindu-majority provinces and to Hindus in Muslim-majority provinces but only nominal statutory majority for Muslims in their two important majority provinces, namely, Bengal and the Punjab.

The Act in its entirety was a sauce neither for the goose nor for the gander. The Muslim League could swallow the provincial part of it, which they accepted but rejected the federal portion of the Act. On the other hand, the Congress found both the Central and Provincial parts of it a bitter pill. They, therefore, rejected the whole Scheme but soon afterwards agreed to participate in the election.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CASE FOR UNITY

In the meantime, Mawlana Muhammad Ali, who brought the Hindus and Muslims shoulder to shoulder in the *Khilafat* movement, had died (A.D. 1931) while attending the Round Table Conference; and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the avowed ambassador of the unity, had taken a secluded but honourable refuge in London. Invited by the Viceroy, Jinnah attended the first and second Sessions of the Round Table Conference. But haunted by the shock which he received at Calcutta, his participation lacked the usual enthusiasm and liveliness. Especially in the Second Session, he was so much overshadowed by the Aga Khan (the leader of the Muslim delegates) and by Mr. Gandhi (who led the Hindus), that he was not invited to the Third Session; because he was not considered to represent any imporant school of Indian opinions. His experience in the Conferences was by no means encouraging. For, the Congress made persistent and uncompromising demand for a Unitary form of Government with a strong Centre, and the Muslims, supported by liberal Hindu leaders such as Tej Bahadur Sapru, pressed for a Federal form of Government with full Provincial Autonomy (*cf. Nineteenth Century,* New York, Vol. 113, Feb. 1933, p. 129-43). Between these two poles, Jinnah discerned his loving concept of "unity" gradually dropping to a state of coma.

Speaking to the Aligarh students in A.D. 1938, Jinnah recounted his experience at the Round Table Conference in the following words:

> "I received the first shock of my life at the meetings of the Round Table Conference. In the face of danger [*i.e.,* for the future of the Muslim community], the Hindu attitude led me to the conclusion that there was no hope for unity. ...I began to feel that

> neither could I help India nor change the Hindu mentality; nor could I make the Musalmans realise the precarious position. ...I felt so disappointed and so depressed that I decided to settle down in London. Not that I did not love India, but I felt so utterly helpless".

The absence of Mawlana Muhammad Ali and Mr. Jinnah from Indian politics, created a vacuum which could not be easily filled. Pressed by his colleagues, especially by Liaqat Ali Khan in 1934, Jinnah consented to come back from London to re-invigorate the moribund Muslim League. On return he settled at Bombay and began his work with a handful of devoted followers. Still the Scheme for Pakistan (broached by Iqbal and Rahmat Ali) made little impression in his mind. He worked as the leader of the Muslim community but not for a communal cause. Rather, hoping against hope, he continued to believe in the doctrine of unity. He felt that the main cause of the failure in achieving unity had lain in the absence of an efficient public opinion to guide the politicians on the right path; so that the politicians themselves were able to manipulate the mass sentiment for their narrow ends. Sir Sayyid had predicted that the unity in this subcontinent could not be achieved because of the communal mentality of the modern educated Hindus. Long experience had brought Jinnah well-nigh to subscribe to the views of the old sage. But Jinnah's confidence was not yet shaken. He was disappointed at the behaviour of the politicians; but he did not despair of the good sense of the masses. In March, 1936, he spoke thus at Delhi:

> "The Hindus and Muslims must be organised separately, and once they are organised they will understand each other better, and then we will not have to wait for years for an understanding".

He called upon the Muslims to organise themselves and to play their part. "We must think of the interest of our community," he emphasised; and "unless you make the best efforts, you will fail and will command no respect and nobody will bother to consult you."

At the time of the Round Table Conference, Jinnah met Iqbal at London and they were reported to be good friends. Presumably Iqbal talked to him about his scheme for creating a separate State for the Muslims in the North-Western India. As Rahmat Ali's plan of Pakistan was published in 1933 while Jinnah had settled at London, he must also have been acquainted with it. But the above evidence shows that the idea of a federation for united India was still looming large in the imagination of Jinnah.

In 1937, Iqbal approached him again, and expressed his belief that it would be necessary to redistribute boundaries of the provinces so as to provide "one or more Muslim States" with absolute majorities in order to solve the problems of the Muslims of this subcontinent. He asked Jinnah, "don't you think that the time for such a demand has already arrived?" But Jinnah was hesitant. His love for unity and federalism had come in sharp conflict with his political experience and with genuine demand for a separate State. Probably, the great geographical distance between Bengal (the most important Muslim majority Province) and the North-Western India appeared to him to be a stumbling block. At any rate, he was unable to decide between federalism and separate State for the Muslims. During this period, he advised the Muslims to think a thousand times before you decide; but once you have decided you must stand as one man. This is indeed reflective of his own indecision.

Nevertheless, the socio-political dynamics, which were moulding the concept of a separate State in the thought of Iqbal, were also driving the experience of

Jinnah to the same goal. In 1930, Iqbal said, "the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India". In the earlier part of March, 1940, Jinnah declared that a constitution must be evolved, which "recognises that there are in India two nations, who must both share the governance of their common mother land", and on the 23rd March, 1940, he presided over the Lahore Session of the Muslim League in which the historic Pakistan Resolution—demanding a separate State for the Muslims of this subcontinent—was passed.

At this time, Jinnah was fully convinced of the two-nation theory. Rather, the idea of the separate nationhood of the Muslims found in him an able exponent. In his address to the Session, he pointed out, "it has always been taken for granted mistakenly that the Musalmans are a minority, and, of course, we have got used to it for such a long time that these settled notions sometimes are very difficult to remove". He firmly declared, "the Musalmans are not a minority. The Musalmans are a nation by any definition". He then appealed to the Muslims and the Hindus to grasp the real nature of their respective religions in the light of day-to-day experience and not to be misled by generalisations and theories. For, Islam and Hinduism were not merely "religions" in the strict sense of the term; but were "quite different and distinct social orders". The problem in India was not, therefore, "an intercommunal but manifestly of an international character", which must be treated as such. "So long as this basic and fundamental truth is not realised" he emphasised, "any constitution that may be built, will result in disaster and will prove destructive and harmful not only to the Musalmans but to the British and Hindus also". Hence, he pleaded for providing the "major nations" of this subcontinent with separate autonomous national States and demanded the division of India for the purpose.

He clearly saw that the idea of integrating the Hindus and the Muslims in one Indian nationhood was a fanciful dream and utterly unrealistic. He emphasised that this nationalistic misconception was, indeed, the cause of most of our political troubles and "will lead India to destruction if we fail to revise our notions in time." Elaborating on this theme, he argued that the Muslims and Hindus not only belonged to two different religious philosophies but also to two distinct and often conflicting social systems whose mode of life, customs, usages, arts and literature, nay, the total outlook and attitude towards life and death were different from each other. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine. Indeed, they are attached to different civilisations and derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics which depict different heroes—"very often the hero of one is a foe of the other". To yoke together two such nations under a single State—"one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric" which might be established to run the Government of such a State. The emergence of this two-nation theory rung the death-knell of the Hindu-Muslim unification and provided the basis for Pakistan Resolution.

CHAPTER IX

PAKISTAN RESOLUTION

At the time of the general election of 1936-37, out of 295 million population of the subcontinent 30 million were enrolled as voters and about 30 per cent. of the total votes was held by the Muslims. Although in Bengal, the Muslim League captured 40 seats in the Legislative Assembly out of 119 Muslim seats (from overall total of 250 seats), the All-India Muslim League recorded less than 5 per cent of the Muslim votes that were cast in the subcontinent. Being over-confident of the Congress victory, Pandit Nehru declared in March 1937, that there were only two parties in this country: Congress and the British. Jinnah reminded him of the traditional special case of the Muslims and asserted that there was a third party, *i.e.*, the Muslims.

The significance of Jinnah's assertion soon became clear during 1937-1939, when in Hindu majority provinces where the Congress formed Ministry, the Muslim students were compelled to bow before the portrait of Mr. Gandhi, efforts were made to stop cow-slaughter, Muslim shops were boycotted, Muslim villagers were prevented from using community wells and finally when the interference of the Hindus in the celebration of Muslim festivals led to numerous communal riots. Frequent official intervention in these cases, biassed against the Muslims (as recorded in the *Pirpur Report,* known also as *Sharif Report,* published by A. K. Fazlul Huq in 1939), disillusioned the Muslims of their vain attachment towards the Congress.

On the 10th October, 1939, All-India Congress Committee demanded (after the war was declared against Germany) an immediate declaration to the effect that India is an independent nation as a price for co-operation in the war-efforts. In the middle of November, all

Congress ministries resigned on the issue and affirmed the policy of non-co-operation. This offered a golden opportunity to the Muslim League to re-assert its own position. Jinnah called upon the Muslims to observe the 22nd December, 1939, as a "Day of Deliverance and Thanks-giving" as a mark of relief by the cessation of the Congress regime to function. The observance was so widespread as to leave no one in doubt of the overwhelming popularity of Mr. Jinnah and that of the Muslim League.

In the meantime, events were moulding the British opinion in favour of paying greater and urgent attention to Indian affairs and the Muslim leaders grew more and more apprehensive of the imposition of the central part of the 1935 Act to the detriment of the Muslim interests. On the 18th October, 1939, the Viceroy, however, allayed the Muslim fears by declaring that the policy and plan on which the 1935 Act was based would be reconsidered in consultation with various parties, interests and communities in India whenever its further enforcement was deemed necessary. The historic Lahore resolution of the Muslim League, which came to be known as the Pakistan Resolution, was adopted on the 23rd March, 1940, in the light of above declaration.

The Resolution stated:

> "No constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary; that the areas in which Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-West and

> Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'independent States' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign".
>
> "That adequate effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the Constitution for minorities in these units and in these regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them; and in other parts of India where the Musalmans are in a minority, adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the Constitution for them and other minorities for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them".

The resolution was moved by Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq of Bengal, one of the most prominent Muslim politicians of the time and was adopted unanimously by the Session. The plurality of Muslim "States" envisaged in the resolution was quickly discarded in favour of one unified State in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India. For, the next morning, the newspapers headlined it as "Pakistan Resolution" and it was accepted by all as such. In the wake of growing enthusiasm, Jinnah could declare towards the close of the year that "no power on earth can prevent Pakistan".

The Lahore Session further authorised the Working Committee of the Muslim League to frame a scheme of constitution in accordance with the above basic principles providing for the final assumption of powers by the two Muslim regions, now forming the two wings of Pakistan. Thus, the two-nation theory took a concrete shape in this Lahore Resolution and marked the final and complete abandonment of the futile policy of reconciliation with the Congress on the basis of a single polity for the subcontinent.

As it is obvious from the text of the resolution as also from a critical examination of its historical background, Pakistan movement aimed at creating proper political and economic conditions for the progress and improvement of the Muslim society and a home-land for the Muslims in which they would be able to preserve their religious and cultural values without let or hindrance. Being hard-pressed between strong repressive hands of the British imperialism and aggressive Hindu nationalism for about two centuries, the Muslim society, at last, succeeded in evolving a worthwhile policy for self-preservation; when the Muslims dived deep into the inner texture of social consciousness in search of salvation, their sentiment of nationality flamed into nationalism and the Pakistan movement was the natural outcome of this trend. The concept of Muslim nationalism or the two-nation theory was not so much an invention as it was a re-discovery of the innermost yearnings of the Muslim community in relation to the changed socio-political circumstances. The distinctive features, which were responsible for the birth of the Pakistan nationhood, were always present in the life of the community and those problems for whose solution Pakistan came into being, were grasped even earlier by Shah Wali Allah and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan; but they were prevented from grappling with the problems successfully because of the backwardness of the Muslims and unfavourable political circumstances. This is where the latter politicians triumphed on account of the re-awakening of the Muslims. Pakistan Resolution gave a new direction to the political thinking of the Muslims and channelised their enthusiasm to a worthwhile objective. Henceforth the Muslims marched on the same forum, *i.e.*, the Muslim League, and stood for the same ideal, *i.e.*, the achievement of Pakistan; and Pakistan was achieved in little over seven years in the teeth of bitter opposition of the mighty Hindu community and some dissident but most influential Muslim leaders.

The revolutionary change of Muslim outlook in Bengal which swept away all opposition to Pakistan is well illustrated by the result of the general election of 1946-47, in which the Muslim League captured all but 5 Muslim seats out of 119, in the Bengal Legislative Assembly. Most of the five persons who were elected independently, however, joined the League soon after their election. So that the Muslim League became almost universally representative of the Muslim views in Bengal and the most powerful political party.

CHAPTER X

LATER CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMERGENCE OF PAKISTAN

In the meantime, the political crisis in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent was further sharpened by the outbreak of World War II in Europe. In September, 1939, the Viceroy of India proclaimed war against Germany and in the absence of the Congress members the proclamation was ratified by both Houses of the Central Legislature. The Muslim majority provinces also came forward to the aid of the British Government, accepted the proclamation and took full part in the war effort. The Congress made a conditional offer for participation in the war effort and demanded immediate declaration of independence of India and transfer of maximum power to a national government. Likewise, the Muslim League offered its co-operation with the British government on two conditions : in the first place, a categorical declaration to the effect that no constitution would be adopted whether for the war period or on a permanent footing without the previous approval of the Muslims; and secondly, grant of equal share to Muslim leadership in the authority and control of the Central and Provincial Governments.

The British Government refused either to transfer power during the war time or to recognise the Congress as the sole representative of all Indian peoples. In 1941, the congress started a non-violent *Satyagraha* movement, which failed. In 1942, when the threat of Japanese invasion became serious, the British Government sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India to resolve the political deadlock. He offered (i) Dominion Status with freedom to secede, (ii) setting up of a constitution-making body to frame the future constitution with provisions for the Provinces or States to form a separate Union, and

(iii) immediate transfer to Indian hands of all subjects except Defence. The offer was rejected by the Muslim League, because it felt that the principle of Pakistan which found only veiled recognition in the document "should be conceded in unequivocal terms". The Congress rejected it on the other hand, because of this veiled recognition of the Pakistan demand; as in the words of Mr. Gandhi, it "contemplated perpetual vivisection of India". By this time, the Congress felt itself irresistably powerful and decided to proceed for freedom without coming to a settlement with the Muslim League. It started the "Quit India" movement, which, according to Mr. Gandhi, was an "open rebellion". The movement led to widespread violence and sabotage. On the 9th August, 1942, the Congress was banned, its leaders including Mr. Gandhi were arrested and the movement was quickly suppressed by the Government.

By this time, the Congress or at least some of its prominent leaders, had begun to realise the growing power of the Muslim League under the able leadership of Mr. Jinnah who then came to be widely known as *Qaid-i-Azam* or the great leader. Moreover, while the Congress leaders were in the jail, Qaid-i-Azam increased the activities of the Muslim League in popularising the Pakistan movement. In 1943 and 1944, the Muslim opinion was thoroughly mobilised in favour of Pakistan and the Muslims stood firmly behind the Qaid-i-Azam. Although Raja Gopalachari's proposal in the Congress for the acceptance of the League's demand for self-determination of the Muslims and its inclusion into the proposed National Government failed during this period, yet an amicable settlement between the League and the Congress appeared to be an urgent and immediate necessity to many Congressites. Finally, in September, 1944, Mr. Gandhi himself came forward to confer with Qaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in quest of a solution.

Mr. Gandhi recognised that (i) there existed a widespread feeling among the Muslims to have a separate State of their own in Balochistan, Sind, North-West Frontier Province, parts of the Punjab and parts of Bengal and Assam where they were in majority; (ii) that these areas should be demarcated by a Commission approved by the League and the Congress; and (iii) that these areas shall form a separate State as soon as possible after India is free from foreign domination. But he insisted that the wishes of all the inhabitants of these areas should be ascertained through votes of the adult population of the areas or through some equivalent method and that proposed separate State would be formed if the votes were cast in favour of separation, that is again, after India attained full freedom.

Qaid-i-Azam pointed out that if the proposals of Mr. Gandhi were accepted, "even in these mutilated areas so defined, the right of self-determination will be exercised not by the Muslims", but by the non-Muslim inhabitants also. Secondly, he pointed out that besides, there was no surety that full sovereignty would be granted to Pakistan by the Hindu dominated Parliament after the British had departed. He, therefore, insisted on coming to a complete settlement immediately on the basis of two fully sovereign States: Pakistan and Hindustan, which was not, however, conceded to by Mr. Gandhi. As a result, the Gandhi-Jinnah talk failed. In September. 1945, to the utter surprise of the Muslim leaders, the Congress passed a resolution reiterating its refusal to allow the secession of any province from the proposed Indian Union.

The Labour Government, which came to power in July, 1945, being relieved of the anxieties of war by the Japanese surrender in August, decided to hold elections in India in 1946, which was postponed during the war time. The Muslim League made Pakistan demand its main election issue and won all the 30 Muslim seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and 427 out of 507 Muslim seats in the Provincial Assemblies. Besides, some of the few Muslim members, who were elected with Congress tickets, joined the Muslim League. The result of the election left no one in doubt as to the untenability of the claim of the Congress that it was a national body representing the Hindus and the Muslims alike and with regard to the intensity of the Muslim feeling for a separate homeland. "The will of the Muslim people had been ascertained by a democratic method", says a prominent writer, "and their verdict was almost unanimously in favour of Pakistan. Neither the Congress nor the British Government could now ignore this firm expression of Muslim opinion".

Thus, after the election of 1946, the British Government was left with only two alternatives: either to evolve a formula for united India on which both the League and the Congress could agree or to concede to the Pakistan demand. The Cabinet Mission, which was sent to India in March, 1946, with the object of "promoting in consultation with the leaders of public opinion, the early realisation of self-government in India", appears to have kept the first alternative in view.

The plan of the Cabinet Mission, which was announced on the 16th May, 1946, proposed a short-term and a long-term scheme. It proposed that an Interim Government was immediately to be established which would be comple'ely Indian and contain an adequate representation of Muslims. The Interim Government would arrange for an elected Constituent Assembly to frame the future constitution on the basis of the long-term proposals, which are as follows:

The Indo-Pakistan subcontinent would be constituted into three Groups, two consisting of the Muslim majority areas in the Eastern and North-Western India and the remaining one of the rest of the provinces in which the Hindus were in a majority. Accordingly, Group B was to consist of the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province and Sind; Group C was to include Bengal and Assam; and Group A to be constituted with the remaining provinces of India. The Groups were to frame their own constitutions except in regard to Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communication which were to be administered by the Union Centre. It was further provided that the Provinces would have the right to opt out of Groups after the first election was held in accordance with the new constitution.

At first the Muslim League accepted the short-term plan on the understanding given by Lord Wavell that the League and Congress would have five seats each in the Interim Government. It also accepted the long-term plan inasmuch as the basis and the foundation of Pakistan were inherent in it by virtue of the compulsory grouping of the six Muslim provinces and in the hope that it would "ultimately result in the establishment of complete, sovereign Pakistan". Qaid-i-Azam, however, warned the British and the Congress that the quickest way to the independence of India was to agree to Pakistan. He said, "either you agree or we shall have it in spite of you".

The Congress accepted the short-term scheme but rejected the plan of composition on the basis of equal representation of the League and the Congress. With regard to the long-term scheme, it declared that there were certain inconsistencies and discrepancies which required clarification and imposed its own clarifications in such a manner that the original meaning of the plan was entirely changed. Although these clarifications were later disowned by the British Cabinet, the Congress succeeded in mutilating the plan to the utter detriment of the Muslim interest.

Finally, in July, 1946, the Council of the Muslim League reviewed the later developments, withdrew the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's proposals and sanctioned "Direct Action" to force the cause of Pakistan. The 16th August was chosen as the day on which the League would explain to the people throughout the subcontinent the reasons why the acceptance was withdrawn and its policy changed. Now, Pakistan movement had captured the imagination of the Muslim masses and a nation was determined to achieve Pakistan unloosing itself equally from the slavery of the British *Raj* and from the prospect of future Hindu domination. The Muslims, man and woman, old and young were again on the march with every readiness to lay down their lives for the national cause.

In September and October a Central Government was formed in accordance with the short-term proposals in which the Congress and the Muslim League participated. But no co-ordination between the two parties could be achieved. At last, on the 20th February, 1947, Mr. Atlee, the British Prime Minister, stated in the House of Commons that in view of the unacceptable interpretation of the Congress to the Cabinet Mission's plan and the categorical rejection of the plan by the Muslim League, the British Government declare their firm resolve to take necessary steps to transfer power to responsible hands by a date not later than June, 1948. He also made it clear that the British Government see no prospect of a constitution being agreed to by all the Indian parties and expressed intention to transfer power either to one Central Government or in some areas to the existing Provincial Governments or in such other way as might seem most reasonable.

In March, 1947, Lord Mountbatten was appointed Viceroy of India and was charged with the Mission to settle as expeditiously as possible the vexed question of

Indian independence. On the 2nd June, 1947, the Mountbatten Plan was announced, which accepted the Muslim demand for a separate State in the Muslim majority areas subject to the vote of the people or their elected representatives. On the 18th July, the Indian Independence Act was passed by the British Parliament laying down that:

> "From August 15, 1947, two independent Dominions shall be set up in India to be known as India and Pakistan".

Accordingly on August 15, Pakistan and the present India emerged as the successor States of British India.

Conclusion

It would thus be evident from the foregoing discussion that the Muslims of Bengal were always in the front row in the struggle for freedom. In the religio-political movement of the 19th century as well as in the constitution modernist movement for the advancement and freedom of the Muslim community, they shared equally with the rest of their brethren belonging to other provinces. In this respect their contribution in setting up the Muslim League in 1906, moving the Pakistan Resolution in 1940 and their almost unanimous vote for Pakistan in 1946, indicate a greater political awareness than what was observed in other provinces of Pakistan.

THE END

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